

This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 07605223 6




Mathews
NBD









N GC





A LITTLE TRAGEDY AT TIEN-TSIN











煥娣

Not in R
3/4/27
DONATED BY THE
MERCANTILE ... ASSOCIATION
NEW YORK CITY

A Little Tragedy at Tien-Tsin

By
Frances
Aymar
Mathews

Author of "My Lady Peggy Goes to Town," "Pretty Peggy," etc.



New York
ROBERT GRIER COOKE
1904

Copyright, 1904, *by* ROBERT GRIER COOKE

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
298152A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1927 L

Press of Robert Grier Cooke



To
S. M. T. G.

—

"In Remembrance"



Contents

A Little Tragedy at Tien-Tsin	1
"Allee Same"	53
The Elopement of the Princess Yu Tu	88
The Go-Away Child	116
The Lie that Yan Foo Told	143
Fifteen Donkeys and a Half	169
The Little Blue Cat from Malta	194
The Mystery at Piper's Ridge	207
The Man Who was Centuries Old	250
The Story of a Stable Door	272
At the Sign of the Shippe	306
The Lone House at Leith	348
The Brothers	367
The Lady of the Sonnets	399



NEW YORK.

A Little Tragedy at Tien-Tsin

✝

Mrs. Wing Tee sat on a pile of mats on top of her big oven-bed in her apartment; the fire beneath the bed was lighted, for the season was somewhat chilly already, and the gentle warmth diffused itself not only within the room, but throughout the reception-hall, which adjoined and gave upon the court.

Miss Wing Tee, aged three years, was in the arms of her nurse, amusing herself with some toys in a corner of the court.

Ah Chang, Mrs. Wing Tee's husband, was away from home, having been absent some time now on a business trip to Peking.

Mrs. Wing Tee was smoking; she had been in Peking herself once at a mission school, whither she had been taken by an excellent American lady when her father and mother and little brothers and sisters had all died of

the fever. At the mission school Wing Tee had learned several things and seen many people. There came one day to visit the school some student interpreters from the British embassy, young men whose pursuit of knowledge was proportioned very equally between seriousness and levity; among them one in particular, Cecil Winton, who was eking out hope and a small salary by newspaper correspondence, and the vividest, most impassioned sort of letters to Miss Violet Urquhart, of Chester-on-Dee.

Wing Tee had only stopped in Peking at the mission school a short time when her uncle, Sam Wah, who had been in America founding an importing house in New York at the period of her wholesale bereavement, returning to China, and learning of his young niece's whereabouts, instantly came to the mission school, and reclaimed his brother's daughter from the clutches of the foreign devils and the insidious influences of the churches; forbade her ever communicating with her benefactors again as long as she lived; tore up her Bible and hymn-book; commanded her to burn many yellow written prayers, to light incense-sticks, to be-

seech and invite the gods and the genii to come out of the grottoes and the mountains to protect her; never to look into the bluish eyes of any foreign devil again; and to retire at once into that seclusion which the degraded and immodest foreign women eschew.

To this end Wing Tee was taken back to Tien-Tsin, and set to work at the trade which her ancestors had plied for upwards of three thousand years—the making of the exquisite little famous figurines of Tien-Tsin.

For many days and weeks Wing Tee modelled tiny images of beggars and opium-smokers, fishermen and lepers, from the beautiful gray clay of her country, and baked them, and dressed them in the most deftly fashioned and appropriate of garments, for Wing Tee was an adept and a very talented little lady in the trade of her ancestors; and from her work her uncle Sam Wah made much money in selling to the foreign devils, for whose extinction he and his household, nevertheless, daily offered up prayers.

One day Sam Wah's partner, Ah Chang, came home to China from America, having left the business prospering in the hands of his

nephew in New York, and Ah Chang, although forty-four years old, when he now beheld Wing Tee through the discreet screens of bamboo behind which she worked at her modelling-table, felt his heart touched for the first time; and it bumped and thumped so furiously at sight of this lovely yellow lily maid that he did not at all delay in informing his partner Sam Wah that he would like to have Wing Tee for his wife.

So presently he had her, and there was a time of elegant rejoicing and great festivity, and unlimited prayers and incense, and happiness and sport, for all concerned, except for Wing Tee herself, down in whose most entirely submissive but still human heart there existed a species of disgust for Ah Chang, who was very fat and very yellow, and had a most magnificent pigtail and a house to correspond, but across whose round visage every now and then when Mrs. Wing Tee regarded it out of the corners of her little eyes, there would flash, as the arrow from the bow, the remembrance of the foreign devil with the bluish eyes who had been "the one in particular" among the young student interpreters she had beheld at the mission school.

While she smoked, watching the rings curl up and interlace above her reclining head; while her husband Ah Chang was trading in Peking; while Miss Wing Tee demurely disported with her nurse in the court; while the musky perfumes from the wardrobes at either end of the bed, wherein hung her garments, came, drawn forth by the newly lighted fire; while the little birds in the court twittered and hopped about; while the seven clocks—each of them marking a different hour!—which Ah Chang had provided for his wife's amusement, ticked and struck at a pleasant random; while the tea-kettle hummed—Mrs. Wing Tee's obstinate and persistent memory returned to the days of her sojourn at the mission school in Peking, and particularly to the morning, now some five years since, when the reprehensible person with the extraordinarily bluish eyes had walked into the school-room and also into her heart.

Mrs. Wing Tee fell a-wondering if it were really true that the foreign devils all took out the eyes of Chinese babies and made them into medicine, if indeed they all smelled like sheep, if the nice condensed milk she used to drink at

the mission school was really composed of the brains of Chinese infants, and if the agreeable and palatable jelly which the lady missionary was wont to make for dessert on Sundays was absolutely compounded by boiling down the remainders of the aforesaid babies; if it could be so that the "plitty man"—for so Mrs. Wing Tee always designated "the one in particular" in her day-dreams— was only white because his mother, like all the other mothers of foreign devils, had resolutely licked him from tenderest youth upward, as pussy-cats lick their kittens.

Many other matters of greater or less moment were pondered over by Mrs. Wing Tee while Miss Wing Tee gambolled in the court.

At last her pipe was empty, and throwing it aside to be picked up by a servant, she brewed herself a cup of tea that was as liquid amber to the sight, a tea-rose to the scent, and ambrosia to the palate. After she had sipped it she ordered the tea things removed, and on the departure of the servant took from behind a screen of silk her modelling-table, with its tools, lump of moist clay, scraps of stuffs and cloths and tinsel, its paints and bowl of water,

and drawing it beside the bed, she again seated herself, and began to mould the wet clay with her small and tapering fingers.

Occasionally Mrs. Wing Tee diverted herself this way, for she had little to do, save some occasional sewing or embroidery. Having spent several months in the mission school at Peking, she had inevitably been touched by the Western demon of unrest—that bitter price the East must pay for all that Christendom can give it.

So now, while the seven clocks—all made in Waterbury, America—ticked, and Miss Wing Tee had at last fallen asleep in the court in her nurse's arms, Mrs. Wing Tee fashioned the lump of gray clay into the image of the "plitty man," "the one man particular," and, not being able to wait in her impatience to bake it, she took up her brushes and colored the eyes the deep rich blue she remembered so well, and the hair yellow like gold in tiny curls, and the lips pink as carmine could make them; and regardless of the moisture which she well knew would dry quickly, Mrs. Wing Tee snipped up her stuffs into garments of the foreign male-devil design, stitched them together,

and sewed them on her figurine, taking great pleasure in the shirt collar and the cravat, and the scrap of linen for a handkerchief, which she stuck in the breast pocket of the coat of her ten-inches-high manikin.

Then Mrs. Wing Tee smiled to herself, and sighed also, for now that she had made the figurine of "the one in particular," the "plitty man" of her dreams, lo! across its agreeable countenance there seemed to crawl the thought of the pudgy and oily face of her absent husband, Ah Chang.

Well, he was in Peking; he could not return for some days yet; she would set the figurine of the "plitty man" in the sun, behind the court hangings, and long before Ah Chang got home it would be dry, and she could look at it a little, and then break it up.

As Mrs. Wing Tee was thus disposing of the manikin she had made, she and all the rest of her household started to their feet, ran to the windows, and peeped out covertly into the street.

A racket, the like of which Mrs. Wing Tee had never heard before, assailed her ears. So frightened was she that she quite forgot to drop

the hanging in front of the figurine of the "plitty man," and with her little nose flattened entirely against the bamboo screen, she peered out into the narrow street, to behold a crowd collected and making all the din possible with pans, chopsticks, billets of wood, up and down, either side, while in the middle a pony bit, kicked, reared, pawed, and snorted like a demon incarnate; on his back clung the rider, a foreigner from his dress and mien, although the head was bent so low between the pony's ears, and the rowels stuck so deep back of his doubled-up knees, that his face was invisible.

"Foreign mandarin up at the market, choosing ponies for the races; try this one; cannot make him servant for himself; think pony dead foreign mandarin in about one second more," remarked a man-servant, respectfully, from the court, whence Miss Wing Tee and her nurse had long since fled into Mrs. Wing Tee's own apartment.

Mrs. Wing Tee shook her head excitedly. She had never seen anything half so exhilarating in her whole life as this mad, tense fight for supremacy betwixt man and beast. The rose-color rushed into her round saffron cheeks;

the lights flashed in her pretty, small eyes; her fists doubled up, and her chest heaved, as the horse or the rider, now this one, now that, got the mastery.

If Mrs. Wing Tee had never spent some time at the mission school, she would have turned from her casement at once on beholding the cause of the turmoil, and her only sensation would have been the lymphatic hope that the Chinese brute would get the better of the foreign devil. Now it was different, quite different; and when the vicious four-legged creature, with one final tug, cast the two-legged creature over his head on her threshold, struck at the prostrate, blood-and-dust-covered face with his scudding hind hoofs, and with a shriek of triumph fled back to the market-place, Mrs. Wing Tee's teeth gritted together, and her palms clapped against one another, and she uttered a smothered, indignant, outraged, vengeful "Oh!"

Two of her servants carried the stricken man into the court. A coolie ran for a doctor, who came, and said that the foreign mister must not be removed on any account. Where were his friends?

No one knew. People from the market, the very dealer from whom he had wished to buy the pony, came and said they could tell nothing about him. The policemen, in their tall, steeple-crowned hats with flowing tassels, were as imperturbably non-committal and immovable as if they had been baptized in either Cork or Dublin. This foreign mister had been the only foreigner at the market that day.

Some one said, "Take him to the consulate."

Another said, "Take him to the mission, or the church, or the school."

But the doctor, having a wholesome knowledge, not alone of his profession, but of the strict account to which he would be held did any harm result from his ministrations, or lack of them, replied, solemnly:

"The foreign mister may not be removed. If he is, he may die. If he is not, he will soon get mended; it is a blow to the nerves, not the bones; he must be quiet. Let him alone, and bathe him all the time with what I say."

With bated breath little Mrs. Wing Tee heard all this as she stood up tiptoeing in the room.

Then, when the doctor went away, she crossed over to the window again to see which one he was, if he was the one she knew, or some stranger; and as she glanced out she saw also that some one watched at the window across the way. Yes, behind the screen of bamboo she beheld between the strips the plump inquiring visage of Lu Lee, a lady who had once thought it would be pleasant to become the wife of Ah Chang.

Mrs. Wing Tee withdrew.

The servants told the nurse, and the nurse came to inform her honorable mistress, who now held Miss Wing Tee, weeping with fright at all the hubbub, in her arms, where she had sat down with apparent composure on the bed.

"The foreign mister must remain or die. No one dares to remove him; no one can explain who he is. What is your honorable pleasure?"

At this moment there recurred to Mrs. Wing Tee with great force some of the teachings of the lady missionaries, and she replied:

"Let him stay. Minister to him. Obey the words and rules of the doctor."

"But the honorable master, Ah Chang, who

has forbidden the foreign devil to enter under any pretext? and—a man!"

"The honorable master is in Peking. Obey!"

And Mrs. Wing Tee, through the screens, could hear very plainly that the servants were doing as they had been bidden.

She hushed Miss Wing Tee to sleep. Presently the twilight fell, and through the slits of the bamboo she saw the light of the lanterns in the court one by one as they were lighted. She heard the servants walk away to their supper, leaving the nurse to watch for the time when the foreign mister should come to his senses. She heard the nurse soaking a cloth in the basinful of mustard oil and peppermint which the doctor had prescribed, squeezing it, and bathing the head of the injured man. For some time she listened, until, in fact, there was nothing more to hear; for the nurse, like Miss Wing Tee, now slept soundly; and there was not a sound save the ticking of the seven Waterbury clocks.

Then Mrs. Wing Tee arose from the oven-bed, laid her little daughter carefully out of her arms, and crossed the room into the little re-

ception-hall, where the foreigner had been put upon some mats in accordance with the doctor's instructions.

The man's face was turned aside on the cloth-covered block of wood which forms the Chinese pillow, and the light fell in a broken shadow across the prostrate form. Mrs. Wing Tee, her fingers to her lips, advanced with caution, her elementary soul much distracted between the traditions of her native land and her recollections of the excellent ladies at the mission school and their care of the sick men and women alike at the time of the great fever in Peking. Curiosity tipped the scale in favor of the Western ideal, and the little wife of Ah Chang gained the side of the stranger, bent over him, peered discrediting, stared the harder, poked the nearest lantern, sending its gleam directly on his face, and then smiled joyfully.

It was indeed "the one in particular."

Cecil Winton, poor lad, not much nearer Violet Urquhart of Chester-on-Dee to-day than he had been five years ago; still pursuing fickle fortune, principally of late by means of fictional literature; always as impassionedly in

love with Miss Violet, who in turn was equally faithful and hopeful with himself.

Mrs. Wing Tee smiled for a full minute, until the snores of the nurse recalled her to a sense of the situation, and with her own hands she now dipped and folded the cloths anew and bound them upon the ugly bruise on the forehead of her unconscious guest. She also knelt down and with a little oval spoon pried open the patient's teeth, and poured between them the decoction that had been prescribed.

Then she stood up and regarded him with shining eyes. She extended one small finger and stroked his cheek very gently.

"Plitty man," whispered Mrs. Wing Tee, contemplatively, standing stock-still for a moment or two. "Velly plitty man," she added, now going over to a lacquered cabinet and setting fire to a handful of yellow written prayers; also lighting some incense-sticks, whence arose a subtle dense film of fragrant smoke, in the midst of which weird cloud-land, curling, wreathing, mounting, thickening, thinning, Cecil Winton, opening cognizant eyes once more upon the world, beheld this lovely little Chinese lady.

He did not move, other than his eyelids, but immediately took in the high-class interior, and the charmingly picturesque little yellow madam.

He muttered two words to himself. They were merely these: "Local color." And while Mrs. Wing Tee tended her incense and her prayers, her guest occupied himself for the perhaps ten-thousandth time in fancying he had the nucleus for the story that was to make a hit — a hit so palpably striking that forever after publishers and editors, managers, playwrights, and stars, would be clinging to his skirts with cables and checks; and that he would marry Miss Violet Urquhart forthwith, and set up a castle, a yacht, a shooting-box, and racing-stable without hesitation, or dread of any deficit in the exchequer.

That tiny exquisite figure in the graceful and elegant black garment fastened with two gold buttons, and in some mysterious fashion contriving to both conceal and outline the curves it covered, and to contain but not completely hide the queer little feet; the great pearl-studded hoops of gold hanging in the round ears; the felicitous arrangement of the smooth

hair; the gold-inlaid large pin thrust through the bands and loops; the cloudland whence she seemed to rise; the twittering of a dreaming bird on its perch near his feet; the aromatic scent; the sleeping amah on her mat yonder; the sleeping child 'way off there on the oven-bed—surely from all this, and the kicks of that devilish—nay, perhaps blessed—brute, must evolve "the" story.

He would lie still, and wait, and look. Which he did, until Mrs. Wing Tee, having burned up all her devotions, turned back to the pile of mats, and her eyes, following the wide-open ones of "the one in particular," found these fixed steadfastly on the figurine of himself which she had set some hours ago to bake in the sun.

Mrs. Wing Tee glided across and pulled the embroidered hangings over her manikin. Cecil Winton had recognized the likeness; it was unmistakably clever and correct; his delight now knew no bounds, and he promptly added a villa at Nice to the catalogue of splendors more than likely to accrue from the story he should write as soon as—well (he now essayed motion) —as soon as he could move!

Mrs. Wing Tee came to him, and it was not very long before they were tolerably good friends; he could speak quite a bit of Chinese, and she had at command a nice little assortment of English words, choice and hoarded possessions, only aired when she was alone, for Ah Chang had enjoined her to forget everything she had ever heard or learned at the mission school.

Presently Winton had explained himself thoroughly and quite historically, save as to Miss Violet Urquhart, and begged to be sent at once to the hotel where he was lodging. Presently Mrs. Wing Tee had assured him that she must on her life obey the doctor, and had also told him of her sojourn at the mission in Peking, and of his visit there. He blithely acceded to a more than vivid recollection of so agreeable a circumstance, even with pleasant alacrity vowed he remembered the countenance of Wing Tee herself, as distinguished from just eight-and-ninety other young Chinese ladies; and altogether the hour passed very charmingly, being punctuated at rapid intervals not only by the increasing snores of the nurse, but by the wetting and changing of

the cloths, and by the refreshments which Mrs. Wing Tee ordered to be brought for her guest.

After he had eaten sparingly, his hostess, with a curious quaint little bob, and a twitch of her satin garments, which she flattered herself was a fine reproduction of the curtsy of the mission ladies, withdrew, leaving Winton to the care of her servants and the superintendence of the now awakened and duly repentant amah.

The doctor came again on the morrow, and while pronouncing his patient better, he said he must be kept still, and not go out or be moved, lest the inflammation, which it now was discovered had extended from the head down through the shoulder and right arm, should prove ungovernable, and the foreign mister shortly lose the use of the aforesaid arm entirely and forever! The honorable lady surely would not refuse to harbor the afflicted?

A threat however slight to his pen arm would have held Winton in the worst hole in the Orient until danger was past; and when it came to this beautiful house, this enchanting little lady, and the figurine! he was not too miserable, even though he could not write so much as a note to Miss Violet Urquhart.

Miss Wing Tee happily took a liking to him, and the servants too, since he tipped them every hour of the day, recklessly drawing on the bank account that he daily felt was to be the inevitable outcome of his helpless condition. He dreamed half the time away in a future land wherein Violet reigned queen over a lot of splendid things; he spent half of the other half in sleep, which the Chinese pharmacopœia induces always; and the remaining quarter Mrs. Wing Tee spent with him.

The seventh day after the accident the doctor said he must get up from his mats, and instead of being carried into the court by the coolies, he should walk, and begin to exercise his arm a very little, and that, God-willing, the foreign mister could go away in three more days.

After exercising as directed he felt rather fagged, and lying down on the mats, presently his eyes closed; and Mrs. Wing Tee, who had listened attentively to all that the doctor had said, now watched that good man going out of the door into the street. She peered at him through the lattice, and Lu Lee opposite peered at Wing Tee through her lattice. Lu

Lee saw Wing Tee double up her small fist and shake it at the back of the doctor's head, and Lu Lee said to herself: "The devil doctor has told Wing Tee that the foreign devil is able to go away, I know. Well, Ah Chang must soon come home from Peking, and since Wing Tee is alone in the world, I must tell him of the desecration of his house in his absence, for to harbor the foreign devil is accursed, no matter if he be a sick devil or a sound devil."

Wing Tee left the window and went and gazed at "the one in particular" with the littlest tear in her eye that ever was seen, and "the one in particular" saw the tear, but chivalrously closed his mental vision to the occurrence. He not only shut his mind's eye, but, as Mrs. Wing Tee now approached him, dropped his lids as well. Perhaps it was cowardly to shirk the emotional situation; but, on the other hand, he being one of those men whose sole resource in a matter of tears was caresses, it is to be allowed that his discretion was better than his valor might have proved.

Little Mrs. Wing Tee paused beside her guest. There was nothing to do for him any more; no further messing with mustard oil and

peppermint, and so forth, which was a pity, for Satan and the idle hand are as true partners in China as in New York. Thinking him asleep, Wing Tee stooped down and laid the most infinitesimal kiss possible on his cheek. It was like the brush of a fairy's wing, but of course it put an end to the subterfuges of "the one in particular," and his left arm slipped around Wing Tee, and he kissed her lips, while he was really thinking of Miss Violet Urquhart, and inwardly smiling at the prospect of actually confiding to her this, his one defection from allegiance.

Wing Tee slid down on the mats beside Winton, and said, in a queer little voice, "Plitty kissee; muchee like."

Decidedly Cecil was not the fellow to refuse so delightful an invitation, and kissed Wing Tee again, this time on her cheek.

"Plitty, plitty kissee! English man kissee no likee Chinee man."

"I hope not!" exclaimed Mr. Winton, fervently.

"Chinee lady kissee likee English lady kissee?" demanded Mrs. Wing Tee.

"Not exactly," responded he, stroking her

shining hair until the little dark head slipped quite down on his shoulder, and a faint sigh proclaimed the satisfaction of Mrs. Wing Tee, while her present support vaguely wondered what the heathen lady would say next.

Mrs. Wing Tee said nothing.

She thought. Thought of the nice lady at the mission school whom the other nice ladies there had spoken of, and said she had had a horrid old husband whom she had been forced into marrying, and that how excellent it was that she had gotten a divorce from him, and was soon to marry a nice young other husband whom she liked much. And Wing Tee wondered how she might set about getting a divorce from Ah Chang; and if she went to the churches here in Tien-Tsin and told them about it, how soon it could be done, and if she could then be married to the foreign mister.

It must be remembered that Mrs. Wing Tee's ideas were strictly elementary, and that her smattering of Western conversion and civilization formed an odd jumble when it encountered her Oriental inheritances.

Cause and effect were rapid affairs in her philosophy, and since the churches could rid

her of Ah Chang and bestow her upon "the one in particular," to the churches she now made up her mind to go, never doubting for a moment but that the guest on whose shoulder she now timorously leaned would be as happy to have her for a wife as she would be to become so.

Just here Winton began to get a bit nervous; and precisely like all men of his character, he took refuge from this too in a caress; he kissed Mrs. Wing Tee's little ear, and picked up her small yellow hand; and then, when she raised her pathetic little shining eyes to his in the twilight, he said, quite to himself, "Damn it!" and sprang up, and paced up and down the room once or twice before he spoke.

When he did speak it was to tell Mrs. Wing Tee, in as matter-of-fact a way as he could muster, that he must be going away to-morrow, very early in the morning.

"Not to-mollow! Not to-mollow!" wailed Wing Tee with a small frightened sob, that went straight to his heart, and caused him to inwardly curse the Chinese pony and the day he had mounted it.

He, however, did not move from the window

where Lu Lee, still always on the alert, beheld his shadow from her peering-place across the very narrow street.

"Come, come, Wing Tee," said Winton with affected carelessness, and laboring into Chinese so as the better to be understood. "Nothing can make me believe that you want a foreign devil under your honorable roof any longer than possible. Your husband will soon be home, and then you will not be lonely any more."

He came away from the casement now and stood with his hands thrust in his trousers pockets; he stood in the centre of the court, and began to hum a little air with a gayety he did not feel.

He was one of those who have the singular idea that women should not be crossed in their affections, however whimsical or evanescent; therefore it is the more to his credit that he persisted in the humming of that gay little air. He had to persist some time, too—fully five minutes by all the Waterbury clocks—while Mrs. Wing Tee sat on the heap of mats, her elbows on her knees, her chin in her palms, and tried with all her might and main to "think it out."

Then "the one in particular" would not wish to be her husband if she went to the churches and was made back into a "Clistian" as she had been at the mission school? Then, after all, she must remain the wife of Ah Chang, whom she loathed? Then the foreign mister would go away, and she would never see him any more, never? And now, not a tear, but a perfect shower of them, came drenching Mrs. Wing Tee's round yellow cheeks, and tasting very salt on her lips, and tumbling down on the beautiful garment she wore.

Cecil would have liked to jump out of the window, but he went on singing, his voice becoming more emphatic as he beheld how Mrs. Wing Tee shook with sobbing.

Presently she stopped very suddenly, and got up, and dried her eyes, and dragged a most pitiful proud little smile up to her lips, and said: "Singee velly nicee. Allee samee singee mission school in Peking long ago."

"Yes?" exclaimed Winton, delightedly, and in a tone of profoundest interest. "Can you sing, Wing Tee? Pray sing me one of the hymns you learned at the mission. Won't you?"

Mrs. Wing Tee's dear little nose turned up in the air; she had no use any more for the mission, or the churches, or their hymns. "Forgettee," she replied, concisely. "Forgettee allee 'bout foleign singee. No like!" Further up tilted Mrs. Wing Tee's delicious bit of a nose.

Winton was now as thoroughly amused as he had a moment before been concerned. The Chinese coquette struck him as decidedly an original phase; and, oh! what a feature it should make in the story!

He laughed, and came a step or two nearer to her.

"No likee foleign singee, foleign lady, foleign players, foleign cookee" (she was entirely too polite and too truthful to include foreign men). "Me likee ev'lything Chinee!" and open flew Mrs. Wing Tee's fan, and she slowly twirled and fluttered it about her little face as she sat down on a mat.

Winton pushed another mat up beside hers and sat down too.

"'Everything Chinese'?" he inquired, with one of those glances which are always given by a man who has attained the end he knew he

ought to struggle for—it is the glance backward into a forbidden paradise, and no man quite forgives himself ever for quitting it willingly.

"Ev'lything," responds Mrs. Wing Tee, cheerfully.

"Shall I sing you a song in Chinese, then?" he asks, slightly baffled.

"Muchee likee; please, thank you," she answers, waving her fan.

According to Western notions, Cecil had a beautiful voice; probably according to Oriental ideas he had nothing of the kind; yet the spice of mission-school training had possibly modified Wing Tee's ear; at all events there were tones of his that must reach any woman's heart, whether she cared for the singer or not. He chose a Chinese song, of course, in deference to her expressed prejudice, but the air was modern Italian and very sweet. The words were, freely rendered:

Sweet art thou as the winds that sweep over
the rice-fields;
Rare art thou as the snow that falleth in the
arms of the pine;
Beautiful art thou as the flower-pheasant,
when in winter

From the mountains he flieth through the brambles to the flowing river to drink.
Yellow art thou as the small young cow;
Full of delights art thou, O little almond-colored lady,
As are the eight pearls.
Thy sleek hair, soft and black as the duck's head;
Thy garments, fine as the plumage of the mandarin-teal;
Thy honorable feet, small as the paws of young badgers—
I salute. Thy two little eyes, bright as the jewel-eyes of the tiger,
I kiss. Thy fingers, pleasant with oil of peanuts, I reverence.
Thou cherry blossom, that hangeth on the bough before me,
I gather thee to my humble and unworthy heart.

All the time he sang he was thinking of Miss Violet Urquhart, but at the last line or so his mind returned to Tien-Tsin and his hostess. He regarded her with a certain curiosity. The small pale yellow face was imperturbable and serene.

"Velly, velly nicee!" remarks Mrs. Wing Tee, in a conventional way. "Muchee 'blige; muchee gland singee."

Cecil bows. There is a certain infinitesimal hurdle in his companion's attitude which he somehow hasn't any force to jump over toward a resumption of more friendly relations; so, a little at a loss for a second, he bows, and goes and takes Miss Wing Tee up in his arms from the midst of her playthings.

He raises the child to his shoulder, and then, for his arm is still weak, sits down, and notwithstanding the lowness of his seat, proceeds to give her a ride on his foot, of which species of entertainment she has, under his tuition of the past few days, become very fond.

"Ha!" laughs Winton. "Miss Wing Tee is becoming a famous horsewoman. So! 'Ride a cock-horse to Banbury Cross'!"

Miss Wing Tee also laughs joyously.

Mrs. Wing Tee says, quietly: "Child muchee like lide thatee way. Thank yan-se-sang" (foreign mister). "Wing Tee go sleepee light 'way. Comee qlickee."

"Just a minute more," pleads Winton for the pouting child; but the mother, with a rare, gentle dignity, lifts her baby from its perch on the guest's knee, and with Miss Wing Tee in her arms, she makes her funny little bob before him.

"Goodee-night; pleasant dleams."

Cecil springs up and puts out his hand. She does not appear to see it.

"Shall I go to-morrow?" he asks, looking down into her impenetrable little Oriental visage.

"Havee say no go to-mollow. Foleign mister pleasee stay to-mollow. Wing Tee givee nicee feast; makee happy yan-se-sang. No, not to-mollow?" The tone was very gracious and sweet, and utterly impersonal; yet of course "the one in particular" decided to stop over to-morrow for the feast, which he presently learned from the servants was already being prepared especially in his honor.

Winton lay awake a long time that night, planning the chapter heads for the story. It seemed to him it must prove a great success, and he was wild with impatience for the day when he should be able once more to use his quill in its behalf, as well as to write to Miss Violet. He dreamed of her too at last when he did fall asleep; of the fair, haughty, lovely English face rising out of a billowy cloud of perfumed smoke, just as he had first beheld the oval face of Wing Tee.

A Little Tragedy at Tien-Tsin

Mrs. Wing Tee did not sleep well. Her acute brain was a perfect chaos between its fixed limitations of ancestral heritage and its actual if puny experiences; its thousands of years of congested barriers, and its modern six months' impetus at the mission school; its disgust and dislike of Ah Chang; its love; its wounded pride; its outraged sensibility; its passionate outcrying; its stoical impassability. Finally, with small clinched hands interlocked and dry hot eyelids, Mrs. Wing Tee fell asleep, just at the hour when her husband, Ah Chang, arrived at the railway station from Peking.

His business had been profitable, and he took a chair and was trotted home by four nimble coolies. He glanced up at the house; no one was about as yet, for it was barely dawn —that is, no one was about at his house.

He paused an instant at the door, arrested by a low sharp "Hist-st-st!" which came from across the street.

As he paused, Ah Chang heard also afar a tinkle of little gongs, the grind of a rattle, a lazy shot across the river, a dull thud from the fort, slicing the heavy air into shivers, the cry of a hair-pin-seller. Long afterward he re-

membered how distinctly he had heard all those unimportant and accustomed sounds between the first "Hist" from across the street and the second.

"Hist-st-st!"

He answered clearly back in good Pekingese, but not loudly. "Well, do you want to speak with me?"

Then the brother of Lu Lee, who had some six years since visited him to propose a marriage with his sister, emerged from his house and came over to Ah Chang's side of the way, and with many salaams, and a large expenditure of self-abasement, and a corresponding elevation of the one addressed, the brother of Lu Lee imparted such information to the husband of Wing Tee as he had been thoroughly instructed to give by that unappreciated but most vigilant and neighborly lady.

Then, with more and more elegant compliments, the brother of Lu Lee backed over to his house, and went inside the door and winked to his waiting relation; and Ah Chang stood quite still.

Not a muscle of his face moved. He appeared as one enjoying the fresh early air.

Then he turned on his heel and walked away into another street some distance off and paid a brief visit to his old friend Fong Fuh. After this he went to a tea-house and drank tea, and pulled his business papers out of his pockets, and read them over and over for a long time—about six hours, in fact—and never for a moment did his expression vary or his behavior in any way indicate either impatience or malice, anger or violence.

However, about a half-hour subsequent to Ah Chang's call upon his old friend Fong Fuh, a little Peking cart, closely curtained, comfortably cushioned, a woman-servant perched on one shaft, while the driver sat upon the other guiding his pony, pulled up before the door of Ah Chang's own house. The woman-servant alighted and entered, and presented to the honorable lady a most beautifully worded invitation from her mistress, Mrs. Fong Fuh, to Mrs. Wing Tee Chang to go at once to pass the day with her, as so often spoken of, and not to fail to bring with her Miss Wing Tee Chang and her amah (nurse).

Wing Tee received this delightful summons as she sat upon her oven-bed arranging her

hair; for it is upon the oven-bed, standing on its two-feet high platform, and occupying nearly the whole length of her chamber, that the Chinese woman spends most of her time, waking as well as sleeping.

She had long yearned for this invitation. To Ah Chang himself she had said before he went away that she would like to make a visit, and he had told her that when she was bidden she should be sure to go, as Fong Fuh was his dear friend, and of much value to him in trade in the matter of cheating the custom officials as to exportations. She had never paid a visit; Chinese ladies do not go out, and are in a sense prisoners; but it was allowable, since Mrs. Wing Tee had not the usual patriarchal surroundings, that she should have this privilege, and moreover that the time once set she must go.

But the feast? "the one in particular?"

Wing Tee's ideas of etiquette prescribed that the feast must proceed even lacking the presence of the mistress. She sent word to the foreign mister with an explanation, and when the answer came back with many compliments that the feast would not be a feast

without her, and that he hoped her honorable pleasure would be to permit him to behold her on her return in the evening, and that he should pray for her gayety and happiness on the visit, there was just that leavening drop in Wing Tee's setting forth that there would have been in the mind of a Western Hemisphere lady under similar circumstances.

She could laugh and clap hands at Miss Wing Tee behind the drawn curtains of the Peking cart as they jolted and bounced over the dreadful streets; she could smile and be pleasant, and deeply interested in Mrs. Fong Fuh's new embroideries and fans, because at the end of the day there must come the getting away from Mrs. Fong Fuh's house back to her own house, where "the one in particular" would be waiting for her.

She knew he would the next day go off forever; she knew that she had some way made mistakes; but all the same she clung to the seeing him just a little while more before the end came.

Ah Chang meantime, now about three o'clock, folded up his business papers, and left the tea-house and went home. As he crossed

the court his queue caught in the bead fringe of the hangings, and turning to loosen it he beheld in the hot sunshine on the shelf the figurine of the "plitty man." Ah Chang regarded it carefully; he did not touch it; his expression did not alter; he dropped the hangings, and then made his arrival known.

The servants soon told him of the foreign mister's accident; the doctor's mandate; the invitation from Mrs. Fong Fuh, accounting for the absence of Mrs. Wing Tee; the ordered feast, which, indeed, was now quite ready to serve; and how joyful and pleasant it was that the honorable and venerated master had returned from Peking just in time to preside over it and do honor to the foreign mister, who had been so generous and cordial with his money.

Would the honorable master now receive the foreign mister, who had not left his chamber this day, and who was departing for always the next morning?

To be sure the honorable master would be only too much pleased to behold the guest beneath his roof, and a servant was promptly sent to ask him to come.

Winton had not at all calculated on this encounter, but after the first second of astonishment he hailed it as one more and unexpected dash of local color, and came to the court with his most engaging manner.

And he had a very engaging manner, that sort of manner that makes a man friends wherever he goes, East or West; he knew it; was not vain of it, only gratefully conscious of its existence.

For about half a second he did pause before he pushed aside the bead curtain separating the entranceway from the court, and he was laughingly aware that he actually prepared his smile to meet Wing Tee's husband, with that perfect assurance of being able to please any one, with which unbroken success had endowed him.

His luck evidently was not on the turn; Ah Chang welcomed his guest with the perfect ease and amiability of one who was familiar with his features, in very excellent English; expressed compassion, interest, chagrin, sorrow, and congratulation on the rehearsal of the accident and its epilogue; he declared his house honored by the presence of so pleasant a guest,

and his delight unbounded in his wife's thoughtful care in the preparation of the feast — which very soon now would be in readiness.

Winton, on his side, was thoroughly charmed with the frank and manly tone of his host; he quite unbosomed himself, as indeed he felt in duty bound, to the man whose roof had harbored him, for lo! these seventeen days; told Ah Chang his trade was authorship, that he had never been in Tien-Tsin before three weeks ago; that he was a stranger and knew no one, whence arose the awkwardness of his situation; told him of his mother and sisters, but not of Miss Violet Urquhart of Chester-on-Dee.

By the time the meal was announced as being served, the two gentlemen were apparently the best possible friends, and it was with a dignified air of the best breeding that Ah Chang excused himself for a few moments, saying that he wished to see if all were in proper order for the entertainment of his guest.

Ah Chang went to his own room and took from a shelf in a large cabinet a jar of ginger, which he opened; he then took a small vial containing a powder from a small cabinet, and he sprinkled the ginger with the powder liber-

ally, and carefully prodded it down as it melted into the thick syrup, until at last the entire contents of the small vial had been absorbed by the sweetmeats. He then replaced the lid on the jar, replaced the vial in the cabinet, and bearing the jar of ginger under his arm, returned to the reception-hall, where Winton awaited him.

"These some velly choice pleselves; I bling myself Peking; like you eat some aftil dinnel; velly extla fine; give me much happy see you eat," said the host, parting the curtains of bamboo and inclining low, with a wave of his left hand, for Winton to precede him.

Which of course the Englishman knew sufficient of Chinese etiquette to utterly decline to do, assuring his host that nothing earthly could ever induce him to take the precedence. Ah Chang in turn refused to go first, and declared his mean and despicable house was almost unfit for the guest to enter at all; to this Cecil demurred in terms no less self-depreciatory, until at last the forms of Oriental politeness were satisfied, and the guest went into the court, where the meal was spread, and the host followed, bearing the jar

of ginger, which he placed on the table near the seat at his left.

Arrived at the board, there now arose the necessary controversy of courtesy as to which should be seated first, both host and guest demurring and declining for a long time, but both finally accomplishing a sitting position, Cecil at the left of the master of the house, that being the seat of honor in the Orient.

First, of course, came the dessert—glistening candied nuts, the largest, most luscious pears in the world, tiny grapes, sweet and bloomy, for all they had been kept for months buried in sand; strange dumplings filled with stewed shrimps and minced vegetables; bamboo shoots; rich pastries; spongy gray Chinese bread; water-chestnuts; rice; whole ducks swimming in bowls of broth; gluey dark-brown eggs; a fish in a pool of sedge-flavored soup, and many other dishes, which little Mrs. Wing Tee had ordered for the delectation of "the one in particular," and of which he ruefully partook, under a mien of smiles, urged thereto by the hospitable husband of the absent lady.

The gluey eggs were a little bit too much for

him; in fact, they had lain in lime for the past two years; so in a thoughtless moment he handed his plate to a servant and asked that it be changed.

It was done reluctantly.

"We have suplestition," remarked Ah Chang, now regarding his guest carefully, "change plate, lady house die velly soon."

"You astound me!" cried Cecil, remorsefully. "That I should have been guilty of such a false step! Bring back the plate, I beg."

"Too late; done," replies Ah Chang, manipulating his chopsticks over the duck, and imploring Cecil to "eat mole, to eat and be velly full!"

"But surely, Mr. Chang, you with your experience, travel, intercourse, intimacy with the Western world, do not—" The guest hesitates.

"Believe suplestition?" finishes Mr. Chang.

Winton inclines his head.

"I tell you, no; suplestition velly nice fol coolies, selvants, same you have leligion, think? Nice keep common people qliet. Chinese man, blains, see much countlies; he no blieve many things." Ah Chang winks

playfully as he idly toys with the lid of the ginger-jar.

Winton laughs.

"Ever been inside one of our churches, Mr. Chang?" he asks, pursuing "local color" of a differing tint, it appears to him now, every day and hour.

Ah Chang bows. "Fine leligion," he affirms. "Much like; much like English talk, English mannels, customs. Nice people. Nice ladies. Nice tlade; no squeeze; nice home life, in England, Melica too; nice molals, evelything nice!"

"My dear sir," cries Winton, who is really pleased at meeting so liberal a Chinaman, "you overwhelm me, for I am, you know, an Englishman."

"I know," replies Ah Chang. "Fol same leason me ask you some qlestions if you pelmit?"

"Dear Mr. Chang, I am at your complete service. Ask me anything you see fit; I am sure I can never requite you for the glimpse of the real Chinese life of the interior which I have had beneath your hospitable roof."

Ah Chang bows. "Velly nice; thank. You tell me how you think I do good business Liv-

elpool, tea, ginseng, silks, scleens, some fine pea'ls, some nice good supelfine gingel pleselves like this one?" Mr. Chang now removes the lid of the ginger-jar, and pushes it, together with one of the forks that have been placed as a concession to foreign prejudice, towards his guest.

"Taste him; velly nice new flavol," suggests Ah Chang. "If you like, then I like see evely English man, evely Melican man too, eat him much."

Winton prods out a good-sized piece of the ginger, dripping with its pasty syrup, and begins to eat it with evident relish. "That is good! Something new in the matter of spicing it up, eh? I suppose?" he inquires, biting off another bit.

"Pelfectly new," assents Ah Chang, who has placed his right elbow on the table, and is leaning his cheek on his extended forefinger, his eyes steadfastly fixed on his guest.

"You like him?" he inquires, now smoothing his upper lip with his finger.

"It's delicious; something nectarous and fascinating in the flavor. Rich, though, but very tempting. I have a sweet tooth—I—"

Winton stretches out his fork for another morsel, gets it, and devours it beneath the unflagging and serene gaze of Ah Chang.

"Nice? Velly nice?" he asks, now putting his left elbow on the table also, leaning his chin in his palms, bending the merest trifle, and staring at the Englishman. "Eat him mole."

The fork with its sticky sweetmeat drops from Winton's now futile grasp, his muscles all relax, from his crown to his soles; his eyes bulge, his head sinks back against his chair, his tongue lolls out, and his lips curl far apart; he cannot stir; he still sees once again billows of fragrant smoke rising and falling in front of him, and in their midst not any more the little visage of Mrs. Wing Tee, or the patrician countenance of Miss Violet Urquhart, but the fat, oily, yellow moon-face of Ah Chang, staring at him mercilessly, unemotionally, with cool impassibility, with calm indifference, his little dull eyes fixed, immovable, steadfast and patient, until the clouds of perfumed incense seem to Winton to melt away, and leave still for one awful second longer the face of the Chinaman drawing nearer and nearer to his own.

Then it was over.

Ah Chang sat still, never budging for an hour, motioning the servants away authoritatively when they approached through the reception-hall.

Presently one of the Waterbury clocks struck an impossible hour, and Ah Chang then took out his watch and glanced at it.

He rose, picked up the Englishman in his arms, and carried him dangling into Mrs. Wing Tee's chamber, and laid him on the floor; then he looked around and espied a strong, finely netted, broad silken sash of a crimson color hanging over a screen; he took it and knelt down beside Winton, and passed it around his chest and under his arms, and tied it at his back in a firm knot; then he got up on his feet and picked Winton up, and carried him to the wardrobe at the end of the big oven-bed, where his wife kept her garments, and he slipped the noose of the silken sash over two of the hooks, and left "the one in particular" hanging in the wardrobe. Then he closed the door of the wardrobe, and slipped off his shoes, and left them in front of the wardrobe door, and went away and put on another pair

of shoes, and took his hat and set out for a little walk, and to think over the great large holiday he would like to make of ten thousand writhing foreign devils' bodies some day soon, when the Empire was quite entirely prepared.

He had not been gone very long before the cart came thumping up to the door, and Mrs. and Miss Wing Tee alighted, and were pleased to reach home in safety; but Mrs. Wing Tee was not pleased to find the house quite dark; it was now twilight time, and all the servants, every one gone out. The nurse went over to the servants' quarters across the court to see if she could find them, but she could not; and her mistress called over to her not to come now, but to prepare some rice for Miss Wing Tee, and bring it bye-and-bye.

Mrs. Wing Tee had a speck of color in her cheek like the hint of pink in the heart of a yellow rose one sees sometimes. She went straight to her own apartment, and put her little girl on the bed to play with the toys Mrs. Fong Fuh had given her; she then peeped out into the reception-hall, but no one was there. She had seen the table in the court still spread, and knew very well how lazy servants can

be, and how faithless when the mistress is absent.

Hark! did she hear a footstep?

No; it was but the creak of the lattice in the wind.

Not yet did "the one in particular" arrive from his room; but he would soon, because he would have heard the noisy rattle of wheels and hoofs.

Mrs. Wing Tee was hunting for her crimson sash of netted silk; she wished to put it around her shoulders; she could not find it where she had left it hanging on the screen, so she made a light and went searching about for it.

Miss Wing Tee was playing on her pigeon-whistle—an uncanny, elfish, attenuated streak of sound it is—while her mother was going round and round the room, finally stopping at the wardrobe, not seeing the shoes at all, so intent was her mind on the sash; she opened the door, and in the small shine of the light she held, while the sound of the whistle dwindled into a silence only broken by the playful ticking of the seven clocks, Mrs. Wing Tee found her crimson sash.

She stood perfectly still, not breathing, her

pretty young eyes fastened upon the blue-white ghastly face that hung before her.

Then, while the child prattled, she set down the light on the floor, and doing so, she espied the shoes. She felt of them inside; they were still warm; she recognized whose shoes they were. She picked up the light once more and ran out into the court, up to the table; she saw the places and the plates for two; she ran back to the wardrobe, and set a little bench and mounted on it to reach Winton's face; she stroked it gently.

"Plitty man velly cold likee icee," she murmured; and then she laid her quivering little puckered mouth on the lips of "the one in particular." She started, smelled of his face, rubbed his mouth with her hand, smelled of that, jumped down from the bench, and trotted back to the table of the feast.

Holding the lantern high and low, she surveyed the viands, and in a moment detected the new jar of ginger. Mrs. Wing Tee smelled of this, too, and with a strange little smile she carried the ginger-jar into her room, and sat down on the bench in front of the wardrobe door, and began to eat from it.

Presently, when she had eaten two pieces, she arose and set the jar on her tea table in the corner farthest away, and laid herself down on her oven-bed, with a pillow under her head, and waited.

She had quite forgotten Miss Wing Tee, who slid from the bed and crawled about in quest of her dropped whistle.

She had quite forgotten almost everything except the face of "the one in particular," the foreign mister with the bluish eyes, and in her obscure mind she had some sort of an equivalent for wondering whether in some other strange country she would ever behold him again. In her quaint, curious, befogged heart, worse befogged with its smatter of Western civilization, she held a passion as strenuously faithful and pure as any the foreign women could show.

And now Mrs. Wing Tee was forgetting even Winton, even Miss Wing Tee.

Stop. Miss Wing Tee had found her pigeon-whistle, and blew it with all her might, and Mrs. Wing Tee tried to smile and call her little daughter to her, but she could not, because she was dead.

When Ah Chang had walked around the streets of the foreign quarter for a while, he walked home again; he saw a faint gleam of light through the lattice, and he entered the court, and stumbled a little, for it was now very dark; he crossed the reception-hall, and came into his wife's apartment.

The little lantern on the floor was burning low, and he paused a moment to find his way; then he began to grope, for the light burned lower yet, and presently he stumbled over his own shoes, and almost into the arms of the foreign mister.

He could not see Mrs. Wing Tee, so he called her name very softly.

No answer.

Then he stepped to the oven-bed, and felt about among the wadded quilts, and Ah Chang found his wife lying, with eyes upturned to the wardrobe.

He sat quietly on the edge of the bed, until he remembered his child.

He thought he heard a gurgling sound in answer, off somewhere on the other side of the room; so he struck a fresh light, and held it up, and saw Miss Wing Tee sitting on the floor

near the tea table in the corner, with the jar between her fat little knees, and her pink mouth full of the sweetmeats, and her eyes beginning to bulge just like the foreign mister's.

By the time her father reached her and took her in his arms, Miss Wing Tee had traveled to the same near-far country where Mrs. Wing Tee and "the one in particular" had journeyed before her.

It was in the scheme of Destiny that Ah Chang should have found in Winton's pockets, when he presently went through them, the letter her lover had written that very morning to Miss Violet Urquhart of Chester-on-Dee, in which he gave not only a faithful account of his own silence, but a noble and touching picture of the innocent and childish soul of Mrs. Wing Tee.

While the seven Waterbury clocks ticked and jangled, Ah Chang read this letter carefully.

And presently he married Lu Lee.

"Allee Same"

✝

WHEN a Chinese child is born, the fortune-teller is always called in. When the fortune-teller came to pronounce his report on the future of Oo Too, the little son whom the Chinese stork brought to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Chi Ping, over the Chinese Theatre, he said:—

"Oo Too will be a great man. There is an evil spirit dwelling in the bedquilt that will try to destroy him, to lose him, but he will be found; and unless the genii are displeased his father will live to be happy and proud of Oo Too."

So little Mrs. Chi Ping was more joyful over the arrival of her son than even before the visit of the fortune-teller, and while her husband attended to his business of acting the parts of bad men in the playhouse downstairs, she occupied herself above in sewing, and cooking, and taking care of Oo Too.

"Allee Same"

He was a fine little yellow, moon-faced fellow, and presently, when he was a year old, he had become the pet of the neighborhood, the delight of the troupe of actors and of the fortune-teller and other wise men of the quarter.

While Mrs. Chi Ping sewed beautiful embroideries to sell to the merchants, she sat on the doorstep of the tall tenement where the theatre was on the first floor, and dozens of her countrymen lodged, like bees in a hive, on all the other stories; and she smoked her pipe, and watched Oo Too playing with his rattle and tiny gong, and dreamed dreams of the time when Oo Too should be a great man; but she shuddered considerably when she thought of the evil spirit that hid in the bedquilt, and wondered if the many yellow written prayers and the incense which her husband and she both burned every day would not appease the genii, and defeat the evil spirit and pull him out of the bedquilt.

But evidently the bedquilt spirit was too much for both prayers and incense; for one memorable day, while Mrs. Ping smoked and embroidered, while Mr. Ping, splendidly attired in the robes of a wicked mandarin,

shouted his part in the theatre at a rehearsal, Oo Too was whisked up and away by a China-town missionary named Miss Virginia Staunton; and although law and sentiment, anger and hatred, entreaty and supplication, were each in turn resorted to by poor Mr. and Mrs. Chi Ping, the courts decided that they were unfit persons to have the custody of their child; that the father was an actor wearing masks; that the mother smoked opium, very likely; and that, since the good and excellent young lady had legally adopted Oo Too, it was for his parents to rejoice that so good a thing had happened to him, rather than to inveigh against the benefaction.

Nevertheless, although Chi Ping went about his business of acting with something more than his accustomed vehemence, he said little; but Mrs. Ping never ceased to clamor in the houses, the shops, the streets, and the theatre for her stolen child; never ceased to burn prayers and incense for his return to her; never ceased to weep and lament that out of her loving mother's arms her firstborn son had been taken away causelessly into the life of foreign devils, to be brought up to hate and despise

the religion of his forefathers, to trample his ancestors under the foot of his mind, and to sneer and laugh at the honorable customs of his native land.

So loud and far-reaching and persistent, indeed, were the murmurings of this tiny yellow mother that they finally reached and smote the heart of Miss Virginia Staunton, who kindly condescended to say to her lawyer, who said it to Chi Ping, who told it to his wife:

"Oo Too is safe and happy, happier than he could possibly be with you; he will be educated and grow up into a Christian man. His name is no longer Oo Too Ping; you cannot find him; no one but myself knows where he is or who he is. But I promise you, if we are all alive, when your son, whom you call Oo Too, is eighteen years of age, you shall see him if you wish to, and you will then be proud of him: and for this I give you my word."

Then Mrs. Ping fell down on her bed, and rent the quilt in pieces, and cried out to Mr. Ping:—

"Ah, it is within this cursed quilt that the evil spirit lived of whom the fortune-teller spoke; and he spoke true: our little son is lost;

for us he is destroyed. He will be found, yes, but after seventeen more years; and when he is found, he will be for us a foreign devil,—no more a Chinaman, like his honorable ancestors!" And Mrs. Ping cried more bitterly than ever.

Mr. Ping said:—

"I would rather believe our little son dead than to hear what the white lady says. It is a mystery that, in a country which is called the free, we find our son taken from our arms, and no one to raise his arm to restore him to us."

"Seventeen years!" moaned Mrs. Ping. "And all those long months, full of long days, I and you must sit down and wait to behold our little son. And when we see him, he will be no longer small to sit in my lap, but a man and a Christian!"

"Seventeen years," reiterated Chi Ping, in a relentless fashion.

"Seventeen years," echoed the fortune-teller, who came in just then, grieving with other friends, but not quite able to conceal his pleasure in the speedy and not entirely usual fulfillment of his prognostications.

"Seventeen years," also said several wise

and rich men, who came in for the purpose of condoling with Chi Ping.

"Seventeen years!" said little Mrs. Ping, with mournful, appealing gestures, her almond eyes asking plainly of these powerful personages if they could not propose some plan to cut away those awful years and restore her baby to her heart.

But they all shook their heads very sadly as they smoked; and Mrs. Ping wept softly on her bed while she tore the evil bedquilt into strips.

"Well," said Chi Ping at last, "it is quite true that we have the most powerful servant on our side, as well as have these others who have stolen our child."

And all the wise, rich men wagged their heads and smoked the harder, and stared at the actor; and his wife stopped tearing up the quilt to stare at him, too.

"Chi Ping is correct," remarked the fortune-teller, with a sage bob; for it was in his trade always to know what every one meant, whether he really did or not; yet he waited silently for Ping to continue.

"We have the servant that is stronger than any other; fleeter than the camel before the

wind, than the hungry mule that crosses the river to his pasture, than the horse that runs into the fire, than the tiger that seeks his mate; slower than the seed that sleeps, than the riches that are always coming, and never arrive; more powerful than the monarchs it watches die, than the gods it defies."

As Chi Ping paused, all present bobbed their heads several times, with a solemn air of sagacity, yet no one undertook to speak.

"We have Time," concluded Ping. "It is our servant."

And they bobbed all once again, and nodded at one another; and three of the richest merchants of the quarter, and a priest, and Chi Ping—leaving out the fortune-teller, for even Chinese fortune-tellers are not above the greed of gold—went out together to the joss house and held a consultation; for Ping was a man of uncommon intelligence and learning, although of the middle class and poor; and among the Chinese the scholar ranks next to royalty.

And while Chi Ping and his advisers and friends took counsel together in the East Side, Miss Virginia Staunton was chatting with her

suitor, the Rev. Thornton Bennett, in the West, about little Oo Too. She said:—

"I am glad, Thornton, that you approve of me about that dear little rescued Chinese darling. I shan't tell even you where he is, but I will tell you the name I have given him,—Ernest Pingree; and I feel that he is going to be a good man, now that I have succeeded in removing him entirely from those wretches, his actor-father and opium-smoking mother. I have legally proven to the poor misguided creatures that he is better off, and very likely, if facts were known, they are glad to be rid of him."

"Highly probable," assented Mr. Bennett, whose mind was also on the Chinese question, and whose hopes were centered on going as a missionary to China, and taking Miss Virginia with him, as his wife.

They were earnest souls, full of zeal, good works, exemplary living, self-denial, and serious purpose, and having equally thorough faith in the purity and in the wisdom of their own actions.

Not very long after Chi Ping's consultation with his friends in the joss house, he left the

theatre, as he said, for good; that is, as an actor. His home remained up in the tenement, and through the long days and far into the nights Mrs. Ping sat alone, or with one or two of her country women, always talking of Oo Too; alone, because her husband had changed his business, and went uptown on the West Side, to work for Ah Soon in his laundry, ironing and washing and starching, and carrying home nice clean clothes in brown parcels to the many customers of Ah Soon. Among these was Miss Virginia Staunton, and quite a number of times the young lady herself paid Chi Ping for the washing, and of course did not know in the least that he was the father of her little adopted boy, Ernest Pingree; but Chi Ping knew, the rich merchants and the priest of the joss house knew. Miss Virginia spoke pleasantly to Chi Ping, and asked him his name; and he smiled and answered, "Johnee Chineeman." And she invited him to come to her class in Sunday school, and he answered very politely: "Johnee velly nice Clistian man allee same likee Melican lady; Johnee makee velly same likee white lady bimeby. Goo'-by."

And Miss Virginia was extremely pleased with her laundryman, and gave him a Prayer Book; and as she was very busy getting ready to be married, she hadn't time just then to instruct him any further.

Of course the wedding was to be soon. Chi Ping knew all that, for the next week such a lot of frilled, laced, and embroidered linen came to the laundry of Ah Soon, with particular instructions that it was to be "done up with extra care," that all the men nodded their heads over their irons and said together, "Mallied soon, Melican lady."

And at the end of the week there was such a great pile of beautiful foamy, filmy things to go home to Miss Virginia that Ah Soon went and bought one of those fine little varnished handcarts to put them in, and Chi Ping took them all home; and Miss Virginia was so pleased with his laundry work that she gave him half a dollar, and said:—

"Johnee, I am going to be married to the best man in the world; and when I am back from my wedding tour, I shall send word to Ah Soon for you to come for my clothes."

And Chi Ping grinned, and when he went

home down to the East Side, late that night, and told his friends of it, they all grinned; and the wisest and richest of the merchants said, with a wink at the joss sticks they lighted, "What a fine servant Time is!"

But little Mrs. Ping mourned and grew paler every day, and her narrow eyes grew hollow, and her cheeks, and she murmured over and over again in the ear of any one who would listen to her, "Seventeen years! Seventeen years!"

Miss Virginia—or rather, as she must now be called, Mrs. Bennett—did not forget her promise to Chi Ping, by any means, and when she returned from Niagara, and went to live in a pretty flat uptown, near her old home, she wrote a postal card, bidding Ah Soon send for the washing: and every week, regularly, Chi Ping fetched and carried the piles of linen, sometimes in his bag, sometimes in the fine little varnished cart, which had Ah Soon's name printed on it in red, and which at that time was quite a novelty, for Ah Soon was then the only Chinaman in town who owned one.

Chi Ping and all his friends considered it a distinct degradation to push or pull the cart,

but neither he nor they ever said so to one another or to any one else; indeed, Ping pursued the even tenor of his uneventful life with that strange and classic calm which has pervaded his nation since the days of Confucius, some twenty-five hundred years ago. There was no outward expression from the present laundryman as to his sentiments on the change in his associations, whatever his inward feelings may have been. He had now scarcely any time to himself, where formerly he had had many hours a day for study, reading, and recreation; his pay was miserably small compared with the good salary he had earned in the portrayal of all the villains of the Chinese drama; his companions in the laundry were men of no education; and altogether, from whatever cause, the present existence of Chi Ping, if from choice or compulsion, must have been sadly at variance with his tastes and former habits. Yet he was never seen other than cheerful, and always trying to console Mrs. Ping in her sorrow.

"The priests do not weary," he said to her. "They recite incantations and pronounce magic words; each day they burn prayers and

incense. The gods and the genii will come out of the grottoes and deal blows, heavy blows to the foreign devils with the bluish eyes. Oo Too will be avenged."

"Ah, but will he ever be returned to me?" cried Mrs. Ping.

And her husband answered, "We must wait."

Meantime the months had slipped away, and it was more than a year since Miss Virginia's wedding day; and one Monday morning, when Chi Ping came with his bag for the clothes, he had to wait a long while at the basement door,—for the Bennetts' flat was on the first floor, and their kitchen was below; and so he sat down, as he often did, on the stone steps, and looked at the children already out on the sidewalk playing.

Presently the cook came and handed him the bundle, and she smiled and said to him, "Johnee, we've got a little baby upstairs."

And Chi Ping did not move on the steps, but said, in his dull, listless way, "Boy?"

"Yes, a nice little boy," the woman replied.

"Good, velly good. Johnee glad. Goo'-by."

And that night, when Mr. Ping went back to Chinatown after his work, he and his rich and powerful friends, the merchants, had a long talk over their pipes and tea in one of the shops, and Chi Ping said, as he rose to go home to his wife:—

"Well, from to-day I always take home the clothes in the cart; and it is no more seventeen years until I see my son, but now only sixteen."

And "Sixteen years! Sixteen years!" wailed little Mrs. Ping monotonously, day in and day out, yet with a great patience, for the Chinese is the most patient person under the sun. Yet sometimes, when she saw the wife of the comedian of the troupe with her little girl in her arms, she reached out her own thin yellow little hands toward the west, where she supposed her Oo Too to be, and wept and trembled and shook until her heart was almost broken with the misery and uncertainty and anguish of it all, with the mad, impotent sense of the injustice and cruelty of it.

So for three hundred and sixty-five days after the birth of Mrs. Bennett's little son, Mrs. Ping continued to reiterate, "Sixteen years! Sixteen years!"

Then Chi Ping said to her, early one morning, as he was going up to the laundry:—

"It is no longer sixteen years: now it is only fifteen, and the son of our enemy is a year of age, and you must burn prayers and incense all day for a week now, and go into the joss house and spend your hours there."

And Mrs. Ping said, "I will do as you say."

That happened to be a Monday morning, and Chi Ping presently trotted off from the laundry, pushing his cart after Mrs. Bennett's clothes. It was December, very cold, and he came as usual and sat on the steps. He was a little too early, and he fell asleep, with his head leaning on the handle of the cart as it stood beside him in the area,—so fast asleep that cook had to awaken him.

"Why, Johnee!" she cried, as she gave him a bounce with the big bundle. "I do always have to be afther wakin' ye up ivry week! What's the matther wid ye? Get up and get out of the way! Sure'n' here's Joanna wantin' to get through wid the baby carriage!"

"Solly, velly solly!" said Chi Ping, rising slowly and yawning. "Chineeman work muchee, sleepee lill, tiled evly day!"

"Allee Same"

"Goo-goo gar-ar-ar!" remarked Thornton Bennett, Jr., seizing Mr. Ping's pointed finger.

Mr. Ping smiled. "Nice lill babee!" he said. "Goo'-by."

On Saturday, when Ah Soon always sent home Mrs. Bennett's clothes, it was still colder than it had been on Monday; but the Bennett baby was brought up to go out in all sorts and conditions of weather, and Chi Ping was not at all surprised when, at the close-gathering twilight, he saw it being wheeled up and down from the corner to the house, waiting and watching for its father to alight from the trolley car. It was the only child on the block just then, although a dozen shrill voices could be heard shrieking around on the avenue, where the gutter had been converted into a sliding-pond. Chi Ping passed the baby carriage, trotting along with his cart. He took out the clothes, and handed the large piles in to the cook; and as he sat down on the step to wait for his money the baby carriage came into the area, and the nurse said, pushing past Chi Ping where he leaned, apparently sleeping soundly:—

"Keep still now, baby, be good, while Jo-

anna goes in and gets your other afghan; it's too cold to keep you out any longer without it, waiting for dada."

Then the same instant that the nurse disappeared Mr. Ping woke up, and took a small vial from one of his jacket pockets and a cloth from another, and tipped the vial on the cloth and clapped it over the face of Thornton Bennett, Jr., and opened the little cart, and snatched up the baby and thrust him, cloth, bottle, and all, inside, and snapped to the cart door, and sat down on the area steps again, and went fast asleep, leaning against the cart handle.

Then the nurse came out, and then the cook, then the baby's mother; then his father arrived from downtown, where he went every day to teach; then the neighbors in the flat-house, and the policemen presently: and Mr. Ping was in the midst of the hubbub and confusion, and Joanna told how she had seen him asleep when she went in, asleep when she came out; and everybody questioned him, but Chi Ping could give no information at all.

"Johnee muchee velly tiled; washee, washee allee time; fallee sleepee evly day; evly time

come Mis' Bennett; solly! Nice lill babee; too bad losee only lill babee havee; velly solly; velly bad. Goo'-by; go tellee Ah Soon. Velly solly too. Come 'gain next week money. Goo'by."

As Chi Ping, his hands on his cart handle, turned to go away, Mrs. Bennett rushed up to him on the sidewalk and laid both her white hands on his yellow ones.

"Oh, Johnee!" cried the frantic mother. "Try, try to remember! Didn't you hear baby cry while you slept? Didn't you hear a footstep, or feel some one brush by you? Try, Johnee, try to remember!"

"No hea' babee cly; if babee cly, Johnee must hea' cly; no hea' no step; no blush by Johnnee. Johnnee sleepee, sleepee sound. Solly."

"Oh, my baby! my baby! Stolen from me! Oh, God! what shall I do?" and the mother sank swooning in her husband's arms, while Chi Ping trotted off, pushing the little varnished cart before him back to the laundry of Ah Soon.

The town rang with it; the whole country echoed the mother's wild prayer, the poor

father's desperate appeals. Rewards were offered by both of the baby's grandfathers, men of wealth and prominence; the town offered a reward; the mothers of the town offered a reward. But Thornton Bennett, Jr., was not to be had for cry of love, or lure of lucre, or subtlety of detection.

The night of the day of his disappearance Chi Ping carried a parcel home to Chinatown, as he often had for the past year,—just the same sized and weighted parcel; he also went out to a shop and had tea and smoked with his rich, influential friends, and the comedian and the manager of the theatre; and a week later, while all the rewards were being offered, and the newspapers had headings in large type, and the land was ringing with accounts of the inscrutable, dastardly cruelty of those who would rob a young mother of her first-born son, Chinatown had a festival of its own, to which no one outside of it paid any heed. Chinatown has many festivals; one more or less makes no difference. In this one they carried, swinging between paper lanterns and strings of beads, strips of bright yellow paper with a blue dragon printed at either end, and

in between the wise words of Chi Ping, late villain of Chinatown theatre,—"Time is our Servant."

By and by, little Mrs. Ping, who now had plenty to do taking care of Thornton Bennett, Jr., dyeing his face with saffron every other day, and his hair with a black liquid, and dressing him in the garments of her own Oo Too, and presently teaching him the first maxims of the classics (that is, Confucius; for Chi Ping was, as has been intimated, an educated person and not under the sway wholly of the Taoist priests),—by and by, then, Mrs. Ping, while she tended the baby, whom they called Ah Ping, began to say, "Fifteen years! Fifteen years!" every morning when she got up, and every night when she went to bed.

And all the while Chi Ping was fetching and carrying the clothes in the handcart from the Bennetts' flat to the laundry of Ah Soon every week, and often seeing Mrs. Bennett, and hearing her incessant laments for her little son.

At last Chi Ping did not come any more for the clothes, and the new Chinaman who came could not speak any English at all, except

"Close comee. Ah Soon man; all light, goo'-by;" and Mrs. Bennett was sorry, for she held any one dear who had seen and known her baby.

Mr. and Mrs. Ping, with Ah Ping, now being full two years of age, started one morning for San Francisco, and reached there five days later, and took ship and sailed away for Hong-Kong and thence traveled to Pekin, with plenty of money and in good comfort, for the rich merchants of Chinatown spared nothing to help avenge the kidnapping of the actor's little son; and they said to Chi Ping when he was leaving the town:—

"Write to us every year for the whole fourteen years,—do not fail once; and we will write to you every year at the Feast of Dragons, and we will keep you in entire knowledge of the movements of those who stole away Oo Too from his mother's arms."

So Chi Ping and his wife and Ah Ping lived on in Pekin, and Chi Ping went back to his old profession of acting, but with only small parts to play and a small salary, in the Royal Theatre.

And from year to year Mrs. Ping said,

"Allee Same"

"Fourteen years, thirteen years, twelve years;" and each year Chi Ping received a letter from his rich merchant friends in America. But the news was always the same, until the eleventh year was near its beginning; then the word came that the Bennetts were going out to China as missionaries, and that their destination was Pekin.

The same year of their arrival they were of course much interested in all that they saw, and although the inscrutable loss of the baby was ever present and never to be lessened, still the father and mother tried to bow in meekness and humility to the affliction that had been permitted; tried to be cheerful and to be good. The annual Feast of Dragons occurred soon after their arrival; and as they gazed out on the procession, they beheld little Ah Ping, now being five years old, pass by, arrayed, as Chinese children are for this greatest of festivals, in embroidered and gold-trimmed garments, a grinning and horrible mask decorating his chest, beautiful crisp paper flowers encircling his head, immense twisted horns springing out from either side of his gaudy wreath, and a festival drum in his hands.

"What a sweet little face, Thornton!" cried Mrs. Bennett. "Look! the features are not Chinese at all, but only the yellow skin and pigtail, and the awful insignia of heathendom. Oh, how I shall work and strive among these benighted children, in blessed memory of my lost darling!"

Which indeed she did for five years. At this time little Mrs. Ping was saying wearily, "Six more years, six more years, more long, more cruel, than the first!" and burning as many prayers and as much incense as she could afford, which was not a great deal, for her husband had lost his position at the theatre; they said he was too old, and no longer supple and big enough of lung; and a few taels a week was all he could earn, and the boy must be well taken care of, he must go on at school.

So Mrs. Ping went to work in a factory, and was pulled and pushed back and forth every day in a wheelbarrow by a coolie, in company with seven other women, just to earn a little and keep Ah Ping at school. Chi Ping himself went from bad to worse in the way of occupation, until finally he had to take to camel-

driving with coals across the marshy plains to Taku.

But Mrs. Ping said when she reached home each night from the oil factory: "Five years, five years, and I shall see my little son;" and she made supper of acorn-flour cakes for herself and Ah Ping, who was now grown to be a fine fellow of eleven, very studious, very devout, very learned in all the religion of the Chinese, which was extremely fitting, as Chi Ping intended him to be a priest, if money could be earned to keep him at the schools and colleges long enough.

But Chi Ping was now away, and could not get back with his reloaded camels for four months longer, and Mrs. Ping had to keep the letter from America unread until his return.

When he got home he read it, and the rich merchants said: "Those who stole away your little son have written to America for one to be sent to them who has been educated in a remote part of Maine. We have seen him; we believe he is Chinese; we think he may be your son; he is of the proper age; but you must wait, and not be in haste."

And Chi Ping and his wife both said, under

their breath, "Haste!" and Chi Ping added: "Oh, but Time is the one excellent servant of the poor; let us not despise the years yet to pass, but the rather spend them in toiling bravely to educate Ah Ping in the grand, the munificent religion of our country."

And they did toil; and the toil wrote wrinkles in the quaint little wistful face of Mrs. Ping, and furrows in the swart countenance of her husband; but the boy did not toil or fare badly, going to his college and the joss house, and learning all the rites and mysteries of the Chinese faith.

Now the five years were nearing their close; the seventeen long years were almost at an end. Ernest Pingree had come out to Pekin, and joined Mr. and Mrs. Bennett at the mission; he was studying for the ministry, and a more enthusiastic, devout, charming lad never lived. The Bennetts had become so attached to him that, in despair of ever gleaning any tidings of their son, they had adopted him, and looked forward to the time when he should be doing wonders among his own race. They had never told him who he was; he knew nothing of his parentage other than the ob-

vious fact of his Mongolian origin,—which was more than Ah Ping had ever learned of his birth. In the climate of China the American child's skin had yellowed; his eyes were black and his hair naturally straight and dark, his eyebrows as scanty as the Americans' frequently are; habit, association, intimacy, had wrought in his features one of those subtle changes of expression, if not of outline, which are not rare, and he passed everywhere as the son of the actor and his wife.

Chi Ping reached home from Taku, with his spongy-footed drove, not very long after the day he had planned; but his journey had been a poor one, and he had but little to show for it. In his absence his wife had been ill and unable to go to the factory, and Ah Ping had had to stay away from the college. There was little even to eat in the house,—a few grains of rice, a little peanut oil, some peach-pit kernels to grind into flour between the stones; yet they ate and were thankful, Ah Ping thought, because they were all once more together.

When he went out, Mrs. Ping said quickly, "The seventeen years are gone, is it not so,—all gone?"

And Chi Ping bowed his head.

"My son! My son! Now, if he be not ead, I shall behold him!" and her small wea- ened face became transfigured.

Chi Ping nodded, rose from the meal, took is wife by the hand, and bade Ah Ping llow them; and they went out into the reet where they lived, near the old Ferry ad, a very ragged, wretched-looking three. nd they trudged along doggedly all the way, ntil they came to the compound, and gained ntrance, and inquired the path to the mission here the Bennetts lived; and they reached ie door, and on the porch, in an American cking-chair, sat Mrs. Bennett, and her hus- and was reading a newspaper aloud, and in- de, in the parlor, Ernest Pingree sat reading, lso, from a large book.

Chi Ping went up first; his wife clung to his irt; she was hungry for the first glimpse of er son. Ah Ping hung back; he was so arved he felt he must humble himself—nay, would not be humiliation, but triumph over ie foreign devil—and ask an alms of these ch people before he left; perhaps that was hat his father and mother had walked so far

for; he could not tell. He understood no other language than the Chinese, not a word; he had been rigorously excluded from the least intercourse with Christians, precisely as Ernest Pingree had been kept away from the Chinese.

Chi Ping spoke first, replying to the kindly inquiring glances of both Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, but speaking directly to the woman:—

"Seventeen years allee same same gone away. Me Chi Ping; father lill babee Melican lady steal 'way long 'go, New York. Melican lady plomise my wife"—little Mrs. Ping's eyes were so full of pathetic longing that they must have moved a heart of stone; only no one was looking at them just then except the lad, dropping his big book, in the parlor—"plomise my wife see my lill babee when eighteen years ol'. Have waitee allee time same same; come, now, whele my son?"

"My son?" echoed Mrs. Ping, stretching her short neck out as a thirsty creature toward the cool waters that it scents.

And then Mrs. Bennett and Mr. Bennett consulted aside for a few moments; for she recalled the face of Mrs. Ping, and her promise

to her long ago, although Mr. Ping she had not, to her knowledge, ever seen, yet his face too seemed familiar; and the husband and wife were stunned and surprised, and utterly nonplussed, for Ernest Pingree was not the sort of lad to present out of hand with a pair of dirty beggars for parents. Still, a promise was a promise, and their patience should be rewarded; and that would be all, for what could they do with Ernest, although he might convert them?

And while Chi and his wife waited, the others went into the parlor and told Ernest Pingree; and he said, "Take me out to them at once."

Then he was led out, and he beheld them, unkempt and ragged as they were.

And little weazen-faced, wistful-eyed Mrs. Ping darted to him, and stretched out her lean, short arms, when Virginia Bennett said, "This is your son."

But when Mrs. Ping came close to Ernest Pingree, she stopped short and drew back, and, cowering behind her husband, she whimpered: "My son! my son! my lill son! foleign mister, no mo' Chineeman; allee shavee man!

allee Clistian; bettel die along ago!" she added passionately, rising now, and turning her back.

Chi Ping stood still, motionless, inexpressive, irresponsive to the kind words Ernest Pingree tried to utter, to the amiable explanations and the tactful little sermon of the missionary and his wife; his countenance as if carved of yellow stone, his eyes as if two black glass beads, while all three consoled, exhorted, did their best.

At last Ah Ping thought it was about time to do what seemed good to him, and he fell down and prostrated himself, his forehead touching the dust before them, as he cried out pitifully, "Ta—la—aie! Ta—la—aie!"

And when they gave him alms, he looked up and smiled in their eyes, but cursed them in his heart.

Still Chi Ping stood motionless, until finally it seemed that no one there had anything more to say; when, breaking the curious pause, he remarked in that casual fashion common to his countrymen, no matter if under the greatest stress or none at all, "Melican lady make lose own lill babee long ago allee same jessee likee my?"

Virginia Bennett turned sharply, and stared at Chi Ping.

Her husband answered for her very gently, for the wound bled yet in both their hearts at a word or a touch: "Yes, our son was stolen from us many years since."

"How did you know it?" Mrs. Bennett asked of Mr. Chi Ping.

"Me washeeman Ah Soon, come close velly same lill babee go," replied Chi Ping gravely, without stirring, while his wife and the lad crouched on the path, under a tree.

"Oh," cried Mrs. Bennett, "now I know why your face seemed familiar to me! I am glad to see you, Johnee! We must be great friends now, and you must be proud of your son here, who is going to be a minister, priest, you know!" she said exuberantly.

"Flends?" echoed Chi Ping. "Ploud, pliest, no sabe. Melican lady, man," he added, raising his keen eyes for a second to the two Occidental faces confronting him, "likee sabe who take 'way lill babee long ago?"

"What do you mean?" cried the woman and man both.

"Ah!" screamed Virginia Bennett, "you know something about my boy! We never thought of you! We trusted you! Who took

him? Who paid you to keep still? Speak!" she shrieked, while Ernest Pingree listened and Mrs. Ping listened, and Ah Ping did not, because he did not understand a word, and was occupied only in being glad of the alms tinkling in his frowzy jacket pocket, and in being glad of the food it would buy.

"No payee me," replied the Chinaman quietly.

"Who stole him?" said the mother tensely.

"Me takee lill babee myself." He stood precisely in the spot where he had been from the first, his yellow face as impassive now as then.

"You!" the Bennetts gasped.

Chi Ping nodded. "Melican lady takee lill babee, my Oo Too; me takee Melican lady lill babee, jessee allee same same, no diflence."

"Where is my child?" Virginia Bennett asks, with the fierceness of all those years full of pent-up suspense and agony concentrated in her words.

"Light here," replies Mr. Ping.

"Alive, thank God!" says the father, under his breath. "Take us to him."

The Chinaman does not stir. "You likee look see he?" he inquires blandly.

"Yes! yes! oh yes! My son! My son!" Mrs. Bennett's eager eyes light up, and she descends the steps quickly.

Chi Ping points with his lean, taper forefinger to the narrow, scrawny, beggarly figure squatting on the ground.

"He you' lill babee, he you' son. He no sabe Englishee talkee."

And even then Chi Ping stood stockstill, and no hint of expression of any kind passed across his face.

Through the horrible heartbreak of silence that followed, the mute looks, the stricken hopelessness of inspection, the unconscious immobility of Ah Ping beneath his parents' regard, Chi Ping kept still. When Mrs. Bennett staggered against her husband's arm for support, he spoke again.

"No likee?" he asked pleasantly. "Velly nicee loung man; fine scholar; hab my teachee allee classic, Confucius; you' lill son glow up nicee Chineeman, be ploud he; bimeby, nex' year, he pliest Chinee 'ligion, sabe? no likee?"

The Bennetts went into the house; the two Pings got up from the ground, and prepared to move when Chi Ping should stir. He

stepped down from the veranda, impassive as ever, but he said in Chinese:—

"Time is a good servant. I am glad I engaged him. Come, now, we will go home."

Some one stopped him; a hand was laid upon his arm,—the hand of his own son, whom they had baptized Ernest Pingree.

"You are my father," the lad said; "yonder is my mother. I will go with you, and serve you, help you, and comfort you."

"You! Clistian man!" said Chi Ping, confounded. "You no comee lib beggarman side! You stay Clistian side: nicee close; nicee housee; nicee eatee, dlinkee, allee time same same."

"It is because I am a Christian," said the lad, "that I choose to go with you."

"Melican lady's boy?" inquired Mr. Ping, pointing to Ah Ping, trotting on ahead with Mrs. Ping.

"I will be his brother," was the reply, and the four walked out of the compound together, and back toward the hovel near the old Ferry road.

Then a great sob sounded out of the mission-house parlor, and the woman there rose

up from her knees, and unhesitatingly walked to the open door and out of it. On the threshold she turned and said to her husband:—

"I am going to my son,—our son. Will you come, too? The greatest good we can do in the world now is to try each day a little to win him back to his birthright."

Thornton Bennett put his arm around her, and they too walked out of the compound, following the path the others had taken; but they went much faster, for the hunger of mother love, long unfed, spurred the woman, and presently she was speaking to her son.

The Elopement of the Princess Yu Tu

O land of queues,
And little shoes,
Pagodas, rice and mice in stews.
Of almond eyes,
And curious pies;
Of Pings and Tings, and Ki's and Li's;
Of big brown bears,
Who go upstairs,
And sit in trees in married pairs.
Where men sail boats
In petticoats;
And flour's made of beans and oats.
O land of pearls,
And lily girls,
Without cravats, or belts, or curls.
Of puddings, made
Of bird's nest braid;
Wood pillows and great gods of jade.
Where forks are sticks,
Lamps have no wicks,
And prayers are little fireworks tricks.

The Elopement of the Princess Yu Tu

O land of queues,
And tiny shoes,
I'd like to find
A window-blind
Left open by some princess kind;
Where I might creep,
And take a peep,
And steal that princess in her sleep.
And sail away,
Across the bay,
And snap my fingers night and day,
At all the queues,
And all the shoes
Belonging to her father's crews.

Mr. John Murray's rich, sweet voice carolled forth this ditty as he swung his little boat around in the brown and tranquil waters of the Pei-ho one cloudy evening about 11.30; he gained the deep shadow of one of the hump-backed bridges and rested on his oars. His thoughts were a medley as he drifted there, singing of the princess; the fact of the matter was, he was young, adventurous, with splendid strength, too much leisure—looking after his father's bank in Tien-Tsin six months out of every twelve did not give him half enough to do—entirely disengaged affections and literally

aching in every artery for something to come along and afford him an outlet for all sorts of superfluous energies.

"And snap my fingers night and day
At all the queues
And all the shoes
Belonging to her father's—!"

The cloud veil doubled up thicker than ever over the face of the moon, and weird cries, curses, trampling feet, calls for mercy and a feminine shriek of terror, rent the air above Mr. Murray's head and caused him to pull from under the bridge a bit and crane his neck to behold a bunch of struggling humanity contending for the mastery of a sedan chair on the bridge. Then all the torches went out and Mr. Murray sat down again and whistled, when, staccato! came the feminine shriek again; tramp, pound, whack, thump, whirr, whizz, thud! and into Mr. Murray's boat, into Mr. Murray's very arms fell the princess he had been vocally craving. Incidentally both Mr. Murray, his new guest and the boat all got a tremendous ducking, but, casting the princess aside for the moment, he righted the

craft, bailed out with his hat, and, when the moon began to show signs of coming out again, regained his seat, gathered the princess's head to his knees and her hands into his own, pounded her palms and wrung out her clothes as well as he could, squeezed her little bits of feet, beat her chest, fanned her brow and wondered if she were young or old; speculated a trifle as to what he should do with her, as Chinese ladies with little feet are not given to the midnight adventure with the foreign devil, save at the imminent risk of the neck of the latter.

This natural train of thought was now interrupted by the princess herself, who said in her native tongue, and in the dark grasping Mr. Murray's hands with an impetuosity which immediately caused him to decide that his helpless burden must be young:

"You are a good, great mandarin; you will not betray poor Princess Yu Tu, the sole daughter of Prince Yu Li Wang; tell me that you will not?"

"Never," responded Murray, in very fair Pekinese, pulling an oar so that they should not drift and easing up the princess' drooping head. "Tell me all about it."

"I am beloved by Fa Moo; my father is his enemy; he is of the Manchus; twice have I sought to escape and join Fa Moo; twice have I been captured by my cruel father, who at last sent me here to Tien-Tsin to be kept in seclusion by my aunt; but all things are possible to long prayers, a strong will and a purse of gold. I was this night escaping from my aunt in a chair to go to Pekin, to be joined at the right side of the great yellow pagoda by my adored Fa Moo, when the red-bearded bandits attacked me on the bridge; they would have held me for a ransom; in the tumult I slipped from the chair, I beheld your boat, I crawled through the arch, I jumped—oh, do not give me back to my aunt, honorable and great mandarin, but help me to reach Fa Moo, and I will give you much gold." Murray patted the princess'—(jove! she was a princess, really, and to get a Chinese princess to Pekin under the circumstances promised all the outlet for superabundant vitality that he could possibly desire!)—hands and assured her he would take her to the right side of the great yellow pagoda or die in the attempt; still, even while swearing his fidelity to the success of the undertaking

and pulling uneasily at his soaked trousers, he did wonder how he was going to do it.

Then the moon came out gloriously, and Princess Yu Tu looked up at her champion, and beheld a foreign devil bending above her, and, as it were, encircling her with his arms, cushioning her tiny, dripping form and gazing down at her with his bluish eyes. And she trembled, shivered, turned cold, did all the other things usual to the situation, and then said, in the best English she could muster—for she had had some instruction that way, and was blessed with a cool head, an intrepid spirit and a vast passion for Fa Moo:

"Foleign mister helpee Chinee plincess? Foleign mister likee plincess him side allee same, likee Fa Moo, likee Yu Tu, maybe? Fa Moo tlavel countly foleign mister, helpee foleign plincess, too. Nice foleign mister!"

Murray laughed outright; they both laughed. Upon close acquaintance the Chinese woman is found not altogether elementarily to differ from the women of other tribes. The quick, steady, clear-headedness of the princess delighted him; in the matter of getting her successfully to Pekin and the "right side of the

great yellow pagoda," he should find her an ally rather than the detriment he had anticipated. Still he was fool enough to wish Fa Moo had been a cherished brother instead of a lover.

They were both dripping wet; the hour was by his watch 12.15; they had drifted so that now they were just opposite the compound of Li Hung Chang, where the huge gray walls rose out, slightly over-topped by the mansion itself. Murray shifted the princess, who began to wring out her garments as she prattled; turned the boat about and pulled up stream for the Bund, making up his mind what he should do as the babble of the little yellow lady tinkled in his ears.

"Foleign mister thinkee, thinkee?" she paused now to inquire, as they neared the wharf and could hear the lazy plash of the shallow waves and the murmurs of the coolies who waited along the shore.

Murray nodded.

"I tell you, princess," he says, drawing off out of the circle of lights on the Bund and halting a minute or two, "I'll get the boat in down yonder in the darkest angle of that dock; I'll jump out; you sit still and hold on to the

rope after I tie it; I'll buy some dry clothes from a boatman and bring them to you. You must put them on: I'm going to take you up to my hotel and tell them I've got a new boy. You must say but little; I will have to trouble you to be very obsequious and walk behind me, until—" Murray felt something very exceedingly warm surging up over his throat and face—"I get you into my room," he added sincerely. "There is no other way to manage, Princess, to reach the right side of the great yellow pagoda by to-morrow night."

Princess Yu Tu paused. Every tradition, belief, custom, ideal of her birth and education had now to be trampled, nay, danced vigorously upon; that, too, in the sole society of one of the accursed; what should she do! The princess did not hesitate above two and twenty seconds; love is just exactly the same little god in China that he is in New York, for instance. She said:

"Allee light; me makee me nicee lil boy selvant foleign mister; tellee Plincess Yu Tu namee callee you?"

"Jack Murray, at your royal highness' service," he answered, waving his hat.

"Jackee Mullee," repeated the princess with painstaking emphasis.

"Jackee will do. In fact," he added with a glance of entertained admiration at the dear little Mongolian face, "suppose you make it Jackee dear, that will be best."

"Jackee dee-ah," repeated the princess, and then they swung smoothly down and around into that dark angle, and presently Murray had tied the boat, left the princess, strolled up the Bund, bought the clothes from the least dirty looking boatman he could discover, and wended his way back to his charge amid the choicest thanks of the yellow gentleman he had left naked in his wake.

He gave the princess the blue livery and helped her to fasten it over her own drenched and dripping wardrobe, as well as he was able, between semi-darkness and a rocking craft; then he gracefully assisted her out of the boat, placed the strange umbrella-like hat he had also bought of the river lounger on her head, and tendering her his arm, said politely:

"Now, Princess, we will have to walk, and it's a good bit of a stretch, too, to the hotel, for

there's not a jinrikisha or a chair or cart to be hired at this hour of the night."

But the Princess Yu Tu could not walk, except a very little way. The Chinese ladies, other than the Manchu women, never walk far, on account of their precious little feet, so Jackee and his new "boy" looked at each other, or would have, had it been light enough in that damp hole, and while the tears stood in the princess' pretty little black eyes, Mr. Murray recalled a method of transportation he had seen employed in connection with fairy-footed folk, and, bending, he conjured the princess to mount "pig-a-back"; which she did, her two gentle arms tightly clasped around Murray's big throat, while he as closely grasped her ankles and trotted off, his unique burden in the blue blouse, petticoat and parasol hat wobbling a good deal as he pursued the way to his hotel.

"Jackee dee-ah," gasped the princess as her steed came to a dead halt in front of the courtyard of the Astor, "puttem me offee now, me tly walkee l'est way."

"Good," replied Murray, setting the princess down as gently as he could, pulling her

hat well over her face, her collarband up, and screening her generally with his own one hundred and sixty-five pounds and the ostentatious waving of his soaked straw hat, as she toddled into the court and across the entrance hall. Thank the fates! empty, save for a sleepy clerk who was too busy flapping mosquitoes and sipping whiskey and soda to notice a well-known guest making a midnight return home with a new boy at his heels.

Luckily Mr. Murray's room was on the first floor, because the princess could not have gone up any stairs. He hurried her inside hastily, told her to be quiet until he came back, rushed out and over to the servants' quarters, whence he presently returned with a clean and complete suit of apparel, shoes included, which he had secured from the cook, an undersized person, for a heavy "commission."

"Princess," said Mr. Murray, "I will leave you. I will go out of the house at once, and not be back until the morning, just in time for us to take a cart and get to the station for the seven o'clock train for Pekin."

The princess bowed the prettiest possible bow, and the color rushed to her cheeks, whence

all gay cosmetics had been washed by the waters of the Pei-ho.

"Jackee dee-ah welly nicee man!"

"Yes," assented Mr. Murray with a grimace addressed to himself. "I might be a little worse. Now, Princess, while I'm gone, you sleep as well as you can on a hair pillow, then in the morning take off all those fine things in silk and satin and put on these," indicating the cook's habiliments. "Ah, the shoes! Your feet!" cried the young man, aghast.

"All light!" exclaimed the princess, picking up Mr. Murray's scissors and snipping off a thick, long lock of her hair, which she proceeded to stuff into the toes of the cook's footwear.

"All light, Jackee dee-ah. Me makee my sellub pigtail l'est hair; me makee nicee lil boy. Me puttee allee my dless bundlee light in buleau dlawer; to-mollow molning, no mol Yu Tu: boy."

"Good night, Princess," said Mr. Murray, touching her morsel of a saffron hand with his handsome red lips, and off he went to the nearest teahouse and sat down, the only white man in the place.

Mr. Murray drank a great many cups of

238152

tea that night, and smoked a vast number of cigars; read the *Times* and the Tien-Tsin paper until he was about blind. At 5.30 some of the regular habitués of the place began to come in, and presently he was in the midst of a low, deafening chatter-clatter of Chinese gentlemen exchanging views; presently, too, he heard rehearsed how "the Princess Yu Tu, the beautiful and only daughter of Prince Yu Li Wang, had once more tried to run away and join her lover, Fa Moo, not eight hours since; how her chair had been attacked by bandits on the bridge; how she had either been taken off captive by the red-bearded horde, or had met a watery grave in the bosom of the river. That her father had been telegraphed to at Pekin; that her aunt was prostrated; that the coolies whom she had bribed were to be killed; that the Pei-ho was to be dragged, the country scoured, the bandits beheaded—if found —that the gods and the genii evidently did not favor the suit of Fa Moo the Manchu, and that the princess, if found alive, was to be married at once to the great old mandarin Ting Sing, who would attain the honorable age of eighty years next week."

Mr. Murray now glanced at his time-piece, paid for his tea, also for a parcel of cakes, monkey-nuts in candied syrup and a pork-puff, and got back to the hotel at 6.10.

At first, hearing of the provisions made for the recapture of his charge, he had thought it wisest perhaps to change his plans, but upon second consideration he concluded to keep straight on in the intention of going to Pekin by rail with his new "boy"; he did not confide to her highness anything that he had heard, but knocked lightly at the door of his room, and on its opening, thrust in the parcel of what he presumed the princess would consider delicacies.

But the Princess Yu Tu had no appetite. Twenty thousand centuries full of feminine ancestry without an adventure among all of them had not set the daughter of Prince Yu Li Wang up, in the stuffed shoes and other garments of the cook of the Astor House, in the possession of a normal state of mind.

"Me allee light?" she asked, anxiously, as Murray surveyed her. "Me allee same, same boy?"

He nodded approvingly, and then requested

her to step outside and wait a minute, which she did, while he exchanged his now dry and stiff clothes for fresh ones, tucked his pistols in his pocket, picked out a packet of cigars, more money from his desk, stuck the princess' coatsleeve almost all into the drawer, out of which it was peeping, and, after a dash at the water jug for face and hands, joined a lady for the first time in his life minus a morning tub.

For the matter of getting across the hall and into the cart the princess acquitted herself with glory, although perambulation with five-inch long feet inside ten-inch long shoes was the cause of anguish untold and unguessed.

Ten minutes later the two boarded the train for Pekin, and Murray took his breath, and, as no one was observing him, turned around and looked at his companion. The little princess kept up bravely, for all her agony of extremities, and really, as he said to himself, not even the practiced eye of her father could have detected in this becapped and moon-faced lad, with his tight queue, obsequious bows and assiduous care of cane and satchel, the sole daughter of his illustrious house.

Pei Tsang reached, Murray left the hot, dusty compartment; in order to account for commissioning the guard to fetch the princess a cup of tea, he told him that his "boy" was ill, and was just entering the station to procure refreshment for himself, when his eyes fell and riveted on a placard which a native official in flapping hat and goggles was tacking up on the wall. Murray was not too proficient in the reading of Chinese, but he made out quickly enough that the red and white poster offered a substantial reward for the return of the Princess Yu Tu's body, dead or alive, and, great Scott! an equal sum for his own; for the rich garments of the princess had been found by the police, directed by the cook and boatman, stuffed in the bureau drawer of his room at the Astor House in Tien-Tsin! The little princess, from the window, also read this cheery announcement; she did not drink her tea; Murray came back into the car without partaking; the train started.

"We will get off at the next stop," he said to her in English. "Do not be afraid. I will yet get you to the right side of the great yellow pagoda, but probably not by to-night."

And the princess replied, "All light; me not aflaid, good foleign mister. Me see Fa Moo allee time in eyes; me gettee Fa Moo side, one time."

At the next stop, accordingly, which proved to be a wholly unofficial one, the result of a fracas between the train coolies and the European engine-driver, and a miserable mud village in the middle of a swamp, out stepped the princess and the foreign devil; here also the encouraging poster greeted them from the hovel of a station; but nobody seemed to notice them as yet, and Murray hesitated just a second whether to dare all, and re-enter the train, when the menacing cry of "Yan-Kwei-Zu! Yan-Kwei-Zu!" assailed his ears from a group of ill-conditioned looking Chinese men and women at the other end of the platform.

It must be recalled that beneath all the smooth civilities and really engaging and multifarious courtesies of the yellow-faced millions, that a hatred as implacable and as positive to assert itself some time as death, reigns supreme, if often unsuspected, over every Chinese for every white-faced man. Murray knew this well. He also knew a trick worth hatred gen-

erally, and now, as the train for Pekin moved away and left him and the princess standing amid a growling crowd, he played his trump and won. He bought a suit of native clothes for himself; retreated and put them on; bought a wheelbarrow and a parasol, all purchases being made, of course, at fabulous prices; informed the princess in English that she must now assume the role of master, all on account of her sweet little useless feet, while he would pose as her servant; set the princess in the barrow, opened the parasol over her supposed-to-be masculine head, hired a coolie at a ruinous rate, and set forth, the coolie dragging to the fore, Murray pushing the barrow in the rear. Their destination was the village of Kwan-So, which lies between the railway line and the Pei-ho; and there Murray knew that it might be possible to effectually lose themselves for the nonce by attaching themselves to a camel caravan. The one thing he did not know was that Kwan-So lay on the other side of the river; and the hither shore gained the coolie promptly declined to do any mortal thing, except return whence he came with the barrow. By dint, however, of much persuasion and liberal com-

missions (every fee is a "commission" in China) the eloping princess and her companion were at last, by the combined efforts of eleven men, six mules, and the long-suffering and much-wriggled-about boat, ferried over and landed in Kwan-So; landed, in fact, exactly in the precise and weirdly smelling midst of a caravan about to start that very day for Russia, by way of Pekin. Could the travelers join the company? By all means. Why not, since the honorable mandarin (i. e., the princess) shook Murray's purse in their faces. There were fine beasts in the string, and plenty of quilts and skins.

"We shall yet reach the right side of the great yellow pagoda, not too many days after the one fixed," said Murray to his charge.

"Tinkee yessee, Jackee dee-ah," murmured the princess as her servant boosted her up on the little cavern situated between the humps of all camels, and again Murray found himself wishing Fa Moo at the bottom of the Yellow Sea.

They started at sundown amid a volley of Oriental oaths that would not have discredited the most Christian of nations, Murray duti-

fully located behind his supposed employer; their particular beast sandwiched betwixt hundreds of his brethren; these, laden with tons of wool, hair, skins, charcoal, soda, mats and grain. Whiffs of musky perfume came to them; also whiffs of many other undesirable sorts; a breath of sandal woods and spices, likewise the odors from their companions of the voyage. To any one who has been on a camel nothing need be said as a reminder of his first ride; to the rest, it may be remarked that the English Channel, the Yellow Sea and Lake Ontario combined and at their level worst are infants' gambols in comparison with the effects produced. Murray had never been on a camel before. The princess had never been anywhere before, save to be sent from Pekin to her aunt at Tien-Tsin; neither was precisely silent, but there was no conversation.

By the light of a splendid new moon they began to feel better, and as the beast with its soft, spongy feet swung over the shifting sands, the mud, the swamps, the pits, the pools and hillocks; in and out beside the millions of graves which all go to make up that which is

vernacularly called "the cart road to Pekin," Princess Yu Tu said:

"Jackee dee-ah, how soon makee my sellub gettee down?"

"Pretty soon, I fancy," replied Mr. Murray, with an internal addendum that ran "and may I be——if I ever get up again!"

And pretty soon they did clamber to the earth, for they had reached the mud village of Ma Tzun. It was midnight, and here the caravan rested until dawn. There was an inn, nay, a street full of inns, each inn full of every description of living thing that crawls and is small; on the wall of the first inn Murray and the princess again beheld the fatal placard. In good sooth Reuter has established a remarkably fine telegraphic service over China, although there are but 400 miles of railroad in an empire of 1,000,000 square miles. A filthy official of some sort challenged them at once, and only consented to let them go after Murray had paid him a round commission and told more lies about his own devotion to Buddha, genii and ancestors than he hoped soon to be forgiven for.

They entered the inn; they partook of sea-

slugs, bamboo shoots and tea. Murray said his master must push on that night in order to worship at the tomb of his ancestors near Maton at sunrise. His master would hire a cart and mules and man; did hire them, and,—one mule hitched in the shafts, five others strung out abreast, fan-fashion, forty feet ahead, the driver perched on the shafts; on the springless boards within Murray, and the princess he had warbled for the previous evening,—started out of the inn yard amid the camels chewing their cud, and made for the great tombs fifteen miles away.

At the end of two hours, by dawn, they had accomplished a third of the journey. As has been intimated, the highways of the Flowery Kingdom are not macadamized. As the sun began to rise behind them something else rose with it out of the east—a cloud, a whirl, a continent of dust, flashing in the new beams like showers of gems. Out of this splendid cloud there came horsemen; one, fatter than the rest, in the lead, and as they drew near the princess raised herself on her elbow and said:

"Jackee dee-ah, my honorable father arrives to kill me."

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Murray, springing to his feet, pitching the driver out into a mudhole up to his neck, seizing the reins and lashing the mules until they flew like the wind; and the horsemen also flew after them. The mules plunged, covering the excessively diversified road with their spread-out; the horsemen yelled as none but the Mongolian can yell; the princess sat bumping in the cart, and Murray stood out on the shaft like a circus rider, the one foot on the wheel mule, as he threw the leather as far as he could. But the horsemen were gaining — had overtaken them. The plump leader dashed in front of the mule fan, with his spear uplifted, causing the five to rear and tumble back into a tangle with the wheeler, while the followers of the prince came swarming up like so many bees, one waving the gown of the princess on his pike, another the shed European coat of Murray, as proofs of their double guilt. But Murray had not been a Rough Rider for nothing. He greeted the return movement of his five beasts with a grin of delight, sprang to the back of the centre mule, cried to the princess, in Chinese, "Keep still!" fired off one of his pistols in the air, dug his

heels into the sides of his mount, thus setting the whole string kicking, snorting, bounding out again to the length of their tether, tumbling the father of the princess off into a pool, frightening his followers out of their wits, and scattering them over the swampy ricelands as any such show of pluck and shot always will the curious Chinese, and causing the eyes of Princess Yu Tu to grow as big as small saucers, her legs to tremble, her heart to throb convulsively; but her lips only murmured, "Fa Moo!" and she was steadfast as is the needle to the pole.

"Houp la! On—on!" shouted Murray, as his big Chinese hat flew off and the splendid sun touched up his blond locks into gold. "On! on!" and he goaded the mules up to the runaway pace, which, as every mule owner is aware, is as the devil compared to a cherub, beside the runaway of horse, donkey, or zebra. Bridging the ditches and ruts as the breeze does; down three feet deep into the shift of the sand, and up as many over the innumerable hummocks; splash into the slimy pools; dash over the millet and marshlands; bang into the mud villages, where the inhabitants fled before

him into their houses; slap-dash into the vast plains where the graves mound up by millions. Never a care had Murray and his mount for the sacred tombs, the venerable ancestors; nay, by Buddha himself! the twenty-four incomparable kickers reel and bound into the midst of a whole family of mandarins and the exposed coffin of one of them rattles in a thousand splinters about Murray's ears. The princess begins to be terrified; nothing is so abhorrent and blasphemous to the Chinese as an undevout approach to the grave of a great-grandfather.

"We shall reach the right side of the great yellow pagoda yet, Princess!" Murray calls back.

But Princess Yu Tu for the first time is in doubt. Shades of the genii! where is she now? She peeps out under the blue baize screen to behold herself thumping at the rate of twenty miles an hour into the Great Avenue of stone animals, the camels and elephants which stand and sit there in rows, marking the graves of her own illustrious forefathers! Yonder rises the cool hill of the purple city against the deep-blue sky; nearer are the salt hills; there towers

the great yellow pagoda itself; here, not ten yards away, comes a horseman full tilt, with his spear poised and his bow and arrows in evidence. Yes, now it is plain she must die for the desecration of the graves; she must suffer because she has sinned and permitted herself to commune with the foreign devil. Oh, for some written prayers to burn! Oh, for some joss sticks! Oh, for one glimpse of the adored face of Fa Moo before she has to die!

At that instant Murray had the chance of parrying the newcomer's spear at short range by a grip on it like a tiger's on a new-found lamb; he seized the reins in his teeth, twisted the weapon out of the enemy's grasp with his right hand, dug into his pocket for his other pistol with his left, and pounded his mount with his knees; his finger was on the trigger when a shriek from the princess and a simultaneous cry from the horseman, "Fa Moo!" "Yu Tu!" caused him to stop short.

Then without more ado the lover of the princess bent his bow and stuck his arrow to rid the earth of the accursed bluish-eyed devil who was, of course, essaying to rob him of his beloved; also Murray again laid his finger on

the trigger, and it is quite impossible to say whether a white or a yellow corpse would have been left at the feet of the stone camels and elephants, had not the little princess, still sporting the shoes of the Astor House cook, leaped out of the cart and, reckless of hoofs, arrows, bullets, wheels, tombs or ancestors, thrown herself between the astonished combatants, crying out, in her native language of course:

"Stop, Fa Moo! Stop, Jackee dee-ah! Stop, Fa Moo, my beloved! Behold me at the right side of the great yellow pagoda, and it is Jackee dee-ah, the honorable American mister, whom we must cherish forever, because we owe it to him that I am here, and that my honorable father lies soaking in a ditch far back."

And Fa Moo dismounted and had some conversation in private with the princess, while Murray put up his pistol and quieted down his mules. Then followed kow-tows, compliments, assurances, profoundest thanks, showers of blessings, invocations of the gods. 'Twas Murray who ventured to recommend a speedy departure, who lifted the princess up behind Fa Moo on his saddle, who pressed a surreptitious kiss on her mite of a yellow hand,

who promised to go and visit them, after they were safely married, in Port Arthur.

There were shining drops in the princess' little eye-corners when she bade "good-by"; when she begged Murray's acceptance of the jewel of Fa Moo; when she sang out:

"Come Polt Althul side, Jackee dee-ah. Fa Moo litee you soon." And off galloped the horse bearing the little princess and her lover.

When they looked back, just at the angle where they turned away eastward from the great yellow pagoda, they descried the six mules peacefully browsing amid the tombs, and Mr. Murray seated comfortably in the niche of a stone camel's neck, just striking a fusee and lighting a cigar.

The Go-Away Child

"HESKETH, my boy," exclaimed the great General, taking the freckled hand of the dandified little blond fellow in both his, "if, as Raycroft says, you know more about China than any Englishman alive, if I want information in time of stress, may I come to you?"

Billy Hesketh twisted the waxed ends of his yellow moustache and raised his straggling eyebrows, barely indicating to the General, and the merchant in whose office on the Bund they all were, the presence of the Fourth—this was the rich trader Su Quong-Lo, who sat apparently immersed in his accounts—while the English student-interpreter hovered at hand in case of need.

The merchant replied aloud to Hesketh's precautionary glance: "The Chinaman doesn't understand one word of English; say whatever you want to."

Hesketh's keen blue eyes turned from the Fourth rather slowly. "General," he continued, "command me always. If I know these infernal heathen, 'time of stress' is very near; that old fellow there in the corner and his tribe are simply spoiling to torture, pike, or flood us; and when the right moment arrives, as they conceive it, they'll do it. Believe me, sir, all I can do is ride a horse. Raycroft," turning to the merchant, "is Young Hopeful outside? I promised to take him to the stables and show him how hard a Chinese pony can kick with a foreign devil on his back."

At this moment the Fourth arose, made his statements and his elaborate good-byes, and walked away.

Ten minutes later Billy and Young Hopeful followed his example, presently reaching a corner where a crumbling gray high wall curved down to the river's edge. A beautiful ash-tree in all its vernal greenery spread and drooped far over the wall from its starting-place within the garden. Hesketh lingered under its grateful shade, while Young Hopeful forged ahead to the stables.

Suddenly Mr. Hesketh heard a queer little

guttural scream, and at the same instant beheld, caught in the wide boughs of the ash, a splendid kite covered all over with a first-class dragon and many sacred texts. Billy understood the Chinese language, having spent fifteen years within constant ear-shot of it, and could read, dangling above his Occidental head, these pleasant maxims from the book *Sun Tse:* "While you discuss with the enemy, massacre him. Sow discord, but soften his heart with voluptuous music and the sight of handsome women. If you are weak, secure cover. Be patient and you will envelop him."

Again the small guttural moan, and more and more the kite wriggled and flopped, as its silken cord was twitched from the other side of the wall.

By whose hand?

By that of the most uncommonly pretty little creature imaginable, whose name was Add-A-Younger-Brother—which petition had been amply answered, since not only in his half-dozen earlier marriages had her father been blessed with many sons, but also with two by his seventh spouse, the mother of this little maid. This charming small personage

was the sole go-away child of her sevenfold widowed father—that is, sole daughter—for so are little girls spoken of in the Flowery Kingdom, since they belong in theory, from birth, rather to the families of future husbands than to their own.

Add-A-Younger-Brother jerked at the kite-string with all her strength. Billy, springing up to the wall and into the tree, caught the kite, quite unseen by its mistress, and promised himself a bit of fun, and possibly an arrest —for which he didn't care a button—when he should jump down into the rich man's garden and restore the dragon and the texts to their rightful owner.

Add-A-Younger-Brother stood still; her pink lips parted to show her small even teeth, and she gazed with wonder at the kite frisking about at Billy's whim. She laughed and clapped her hands, but softly, lest the servants should come and disturb this beautiful novelty.

She was only sixteen—a child whose father, of course, regarded her as a burden soon to be gotten rid of by a marriage to a nice young man whom she had never seen, named Excite-the-Clouds. She had come into her woman-

hood all unawares, unheeded. Yet in some mysterious fashion the echo of the outer world had floated over the great gray wall, and she had felt unrestful cravings. When Billy pulled the cord of her kite she wondered who it was up in the ash-tree. Hesketh jumped down into the garden, landing at the side of the mistress of the kite, who uttered a low scream of terror, and retreated as fast as she could, up the garden, beating the air with her small fists and covering her face with her wide sleeves. Hesketh pursued her; he spoke to her in pretty fair Chinese. She halted, but still held up her sleeves as a sort of screen betwixt them.

"Honorable, virtuous, industrious, and pious young lady," quoth he, "allow an unworthy worm to restore this to you on his knees!" and Hesketh knelt at the tiny feet of Add-A-Younger-Brother and held up the kite, the reel attached to its silk cord being still between the taper fingers of the little lady.

"Foreign mister," whispered Add-A-Younger-Brother, "go away from Chinese woman," and then she lowered the sleeves one inch and peeped at him with immobile face but much-moved soul.

"Don't bid me to go until you have condescended to take back your kite from my unworthy embrace!" cried Billy, advancing a bit on his knees, as the tiny maid now thought proper to continue her retreat on her three-inch-long feet.

"Please, beautiful and elegant young lady, pause to receive it!"

Add-A-Younger-Brother did pause; dropped her sleeves another inch, let her young eyes rest in the tender admiring glance of his, and was reaching out her tiny hand toward him for the kite, when a scratch so slight Hesketh did not notice it caused her to start back, cover up her face, and peg up to the latticed end of her father's house, still holding her reel in her hand, while Billy still had possession of the kite.

When he looked up the garden and saw a set of the slats move as Add-A-Younger-Brother approached, saw a pair of eyes, saw the little maid apply her ear, then her mouth, to an opening, he understood, turned his back with a smile, and was just making up his mind to avoid the tediousness of an arrest and vault the gray wall, when a twitch at the

cord still about his fingers made him stop. Not turning his head, he backed up the path in obedience to the dictates of the reel, until the line slackened; then he looked, and found himself face to face with Add-A-Younger-Brother, whose interview with the Unseen must have been potent, since now she smiled at Billy Hesketh, and bowed down to the ground, touching the latest imprint of his high heel with her forehead in the dust, and taking the kite from him, said, in the softest voice imaginable:

"Foreign mister, highly welcomed, honorable sir, deign to occupy the squalid, miserable, and despicable house of my father, stoop to inhabit the vile and filthy garden. Let your humble slave set you out refreshment, which, unfit for the curs, yet is the most delicious I have to offer."

Hesketh, while disengaging his fingers from the cord, and raising Add-A-Younger-Brother to a far more precarious position on her feet, looked around and questioned if he had swung himself into a tea-house garden; but one glance sufficed to dispel this idea, and, fascinated with the note of mystery, he plied his

diminutive hostess with many compliments and smiles; also with sweetmeats from his pocket, at the same time contriving to interweave as diplomatic an inquiry into the cause of her altered demeanor as was at his command. At last, all subtler methods failing, he put a direct question:

"Why had she shrunk from the one who desired only to return her holy kite?"

Add-A-Younger-Brother looked coyly down into the dirty fish-pond near which they stood; then, with a grace of coquetry that would not have discredited a salon in Paris itself, the universal feminine essence escaped from the eternal flask, she raised her long lids a little from her soft eyes, and shot a swift glance up at Billy.

"Chinese woman had not looked at foreign mister when she screamed so hard."

And Billy, whose heart had been touched by dozens of ladies all over the habitable globe, felt that susceptible organ bump once again in his breast most pleasantly.

At the same time he did not lose sight of the fixed principles of the Oriental social code, and while agreeably stirred by the unexpected, yet felt called upon to fathom the why.

"Was the honorable father away fr
home? and all the other honorable and
vated relatives? and the servants?"

But Add-A-Younger-Brother's instructi
did not help her here, so she merely hung
head, laughed, and made for the mysti
Billy a cup of tea, which was as nectar to
lips of that young gentleman; and when
small maid sat down on a stool at his s
when he lowered his cup, sweetened with a
from his store, to her pink lips, when
sipped, while her little eyes slanted off tow
the lattice, Billy didn't notice that; he wa
that state of mind which would have b
natural to any man of sensibility—under s
ilar conditions.

"To the devil and the deep sea with conv
tions and precedents! By-and-by," said
to himself, "I might make a first-class li
Christian of her, and perhaps—"

At which point in his musings Add
Younger-Brother jumped up, pushed his
cup in his hand, and said:

"Foreign mister go now. Go quick!"

There was a scratching on the lattice,
Billy returned with a bounce to the riddl

his whereabouts, rose, put down the cup, and said, in a hurried whisper:

"Come again soon?"

"Do not know; maybe."

"Make a sign?"

"What sign?" Add-A-Younger-Brother had now pegged quite up to the lattice, and leaning against it, possibly derived not only physical but mental support from it.

Then, as they reached the garden end, Add-A-Younger-Brother said to Billy:

"Maybe, some day, let little bird go loose from string up in tree; then foreign mister come in again, drink more of my honorable father's best tea; maybe; don't know. Good-by," and she smiled and fluttered her fan so adorably, yet with such a quaint infantile grace, such a melancholy droop of the corners of her mouth, as made Billy swear there never was such a delicious little thing on earth.

While Mr. Hesketh was getting back to the commonplace and the stable, Add-A-Younger Brother got on the other side of the lattice into the large pleasant reception-room of her father's abode. Her father chanced to be Su Quong-Lo, the merchant whom Billy had seen

only that very morning in Raycroft's counting-house. He was a very intelligent, highly considered, astute, rich Chinese gentleman; subtle as all his race, but with possibly an accentuation of that trait—which statement may be the better recognized when it is said that Su Quong-Lo had in his youth spent seven years in San Francisco, and spoke English fluently.

Add-A-Younger-Brother stood silent, then bowed deferentially to her parent.

Su Quong-Lo beckoned to his go-away child; she came near and knelt to listen to his instructions; and when her father ceased speaking she bowed her forehead meekly in the dust and answered:

"I will obey the commands of my honorable father at any price it may cost, even of life."

"Then," replied Su Quong-Lo, "my foolish child may expect great and elegant rewards from the gods in the way of a superior son in the first year of her marriage with Excite-the Clouds."

Su Quong-Lo now took up his pipe, while Add-A-Younger-Brother withdrew to her room, sat down on her oven-bed, and embroidered on the longevity pillows, but she forgot

all about her intended husband, and saw nothing between her stitches but Billy Hesketh's blue eyes.

.

At Ho-hsi-tou, fifty miles from Tien-Tsin, five thousand men were garrisoned, hoping each day to be summoned for active service by the great General in Tien-Tsin. It was the amiable intention of the Fourth and his associates to drown these five thousand foreign devils like rats; therefore Su Quong-Lo had listened with particular ears that morning to the remarks exchanged between the General and Mr. Hesketh; had then and there made up his mind to put a spy on Billy's end of the agreement, while he himself attended to the General's, when lo! the holy kite had done the business.

For eight days Mr. Hesketh was permitted to parade up and down under the ash boughs without receiving a single token from the little lady of the garden; then at last, on the ninth day of the month, he beheld one of the gay little birds fluttering its clipped wings, and being caught by its sharp-shorn tail in a forked twig.

Short work made Billy of trapping the bird and getting himself down at the infinitesimal feet of the Chinese maid.

For Billy it was an occasion of unmixed entertainment; for the small hostess, of conflicting emotions; it was a difficult task to pilot her own feelings and the behest of the Unseen. She told Billy many lies about her "absent father in Shanghai"; of "English doctor-lady," who had taught her how to be fond of white people; to have "high regard" for "the churches"; of her internal longings for "Western civilization and larger feet." All these confidences were uttered in a clear, loud voice, which could not fail to reach Su Quong-Lo where he sat behind the lattice. And louder and clearer sounded out the yellow maid's voice as she asked Billy what tea-houses he liked best in Tien-Tsin; how he passed his time; how many Chinamen he knew; when he was going away; how many soldiers there were at Port Arthur; and how fast he could ride on a horse.

Billy took much pleasure and had a vast entertainment in answering all these questions of his little Chinese sweetheart, at the same time

unconsciously providing unlimited joy for the Fourth behind the lattice.

"Soon," said Billy, with that complaisant garrulity which is born twin in man with his awakened susceptibilities, "there will be thousands of my countrymen in Tien-Tsin; also Russians and Germans; the great General I serve has sent for them to start out Thursday night."

Now Su Quong-Lo did not stop to listen any longer, but took up his hat, fan, and umbrella, went out, and got astride of the fine mule that always stood ready saddled at his door, and rode off to a conference with his fellow-clansmen, the Boxers.

As she heard the mule of her father trot off, Add-A-Younger-Brother took a few stitches in the longevity pillow embroidery with a very earnest air, yet when Billy drew it out of her fingers she did not object; when he slipped along the bench very close to her, and gathered her two little hands upon his own shoulders, and asked her to kiss him, she did not appear startled or aggrieved, but with a pathetic and unfathomable grace she smiled and did just as Billy asked her to; she even laughed

when he was obliged to show her how to give the kiss in the foreign fashion (for the Chinese esteem kissing a reprehensible and immodest practice, in which, it may be imagined, young ladies are unversed), and this exquisite and unusual lack of even a hint of coquetry, this quaint archaic flavor of submissiveness, so delighted Hesketh, who loathed all collegiate, learned, and progressive ladies, that he was, for that half-hour, just as happy as any fellow could be.

The little go-away girl was happy, too, with a happiness as far beyond the happiness of her companion as is the dream of renunciation beyond the dream of attainment.

.

That same night the Captain at Ho-hsi-tou received orders from headquarters to start for Tien-Tsin at midnight of Thursday; the sluicemen at Ho-hsi-tou also received orders to make the floods ready for the troops; the native officials at both places had orders to cut the telegraph wires. Su Quong-Lo got up on his oven-bed and lay with his short yellow neck on his calico-covered wooden pillow for only about half an hour, when his large ware-

house on the Bund burned down: it was insured for its full value.

The trader, sitting up on his thin quilted mattress, saw the pink flush of the flames, grinned, lay down again, never stirring to go to help put out the fire he had kindled; and when morning came, no one so sad, so surprised, so horror-stricken, as the owner of the razed warehouse. Many friends condoled with him, especially his excellent nearest neighbor Raycroft, whose offer of desk-room was at once accepted, as may be judged when it is said that his sole object in setting fire to his own place of business had been to obtain temporary use of that of the English merchant.

Therefore, that very morning of the tenth day, the honorable father of Add-A-Younger-Brother was installed in a comfortable corner at the warehouse within agreeable ear-shot of all the conversations carried on; there he transacted his affairs with neatness and despatch, and when all his countrymen had been dealt with, including an innocent-looking brace of ruffians, there in the absence of the interpreter, Su Quong-Lo sat on his stool smoking and reading his paper from Peking.

ight. Custom would have sent
ne some time ago; Raycroft was,
l toiling at his correspondence
s steamer; the General sat
ith a dozen maps before him,
.. clatter of hoofs was heard; at that precise instant the pipe and paper fell from Su Quong-Lo's hands, and his head nodded on his breast. A pony stopped at the warehouse; Billy Hesketh jumped off, rushed in, and said to the General, in a tense, quiet way:

"The sluices are to be cut in the country about Ho-hsi-tou to-night at twelve; I overheard the plot—it is of long standing, thoroughly planned and manned. I rode to the telegraph office; those damned devils say, and it's true, that the wires are all down between here and Ho-hsi-tou. I am here, sir, at your orders, to do what I can to save five thousand English lives."

As Hesketh ceased his eyes lighted on the amber countenance of the Fourth, whose livid lips hung apart, and whose expression was that of one whose sleep had carried him far from his present surroundings.

The great General sprang to his feet with an oath; so did Raycroft.

"There's no hope, sir, but one," added Billy. "If you'll accept my poor offer—no man in the service knows the country and the people as I do—I believe I can cover the fifty miles, untaken, in time to prevent the start."

"Done!" said the General; "and I'll intrust you with the secret despatches, too, if you'll take 'em."

Hesketh nodded emphatically, put out his hand for the small thin packet, and tucked it away in his left breast pocket.

At this moment the Fourth awoke, rose, salaamed many times, closed his desk, and hurried home.

Hesketh had his second thought now, and not waiting for his attendant to come in, he went out, swung into his saddle, and said to the boy, in a low voice, while the General and Raycroft exchanged a lot of wordy farewells:

"Be at the corner of the street where the ash-tree hangs over the gray wall, you know, in ten minutes; bring the fastest pony in the string. Go."

The second thought had been, of course, of his little lady, so in two minutes he was up the wall, swinging on the ash boughs, landing in

the dirty garden, and finding Add-A-Younger-Brother sitting there, as if really waiting for him, with pipes, tea, and embroidery. In fact, she had thus disposed herself and her attendant circumstances at the express command of her honorable father, who now sat behind the lattice.

The Celestial apprehension of primitive cause and effect is no whit behind that of the so-called civilized nations; the trader was not out in his calculation that Billy would try to see his go-away child before he started on a death-promising errand.

Add-A-Younger-Brother listened to Billy's news with composure, doubly induced by having heard it before, and by the Presence back of the lattice; but she pressed his hands in both hers down in the folds of her satin blouse, where she knew her father could not see. She plied Billy with tea, nicely sweetened, she assured him, "in foreign fashion," and Billy drank and was grateful, and presently was a bit dazed, and he took the pretty pipe which his little sweetheart lighted and smoked it for a few moments, and was more dazed; and yet he could feel the sleek head resting tremulously

on his breast, could feel the pressure of tiny hands, it seemed, on his heart. But no, she was only playing with his watch, which she regarded but as a toy; he saw her, through the film of the smoke, hold it up above her head toward the lattice and smile very sweetly. Then she replaced it in his pocket while she stood behind him; also, which he did not either see or feel, she put something else in her own pocket. Then Billy felt the flutter of her fan, the flower-touch of her baby fingers, drew a long breath, looked around, remembered, jerked out his watch. Well, it lacked five minutes yet of making the ten he had spared himself, and there was his wee lady on her knees beside him, a curious expression on her face that he did not comprehend.

Su Quong-Lo did not wish to kill Hesketh in his house; having seen the despatches secured, and the time of day set permanently back, he popped out at once to his tea-house to start the innocent-appearing ruffians and their gang on their way, and to prepare to have good joss on the morrow, celebrating the slaughter by the floods.

His daughter meantime knelt there in a slip

of moonlight at the side of Hesketh, and asked him a queer thing; she said:

"Take me a piece of this red paper, and the pencil out of your pocket, honorable sir, and write, in your language, these two words for me, 'Look, Foot,' and I will be forever grateful to you, and my heart will rest in peace until I stand before the God of Fate."

And Billy, laughing, pulled out his stylographic pen and wrote the two words in large letters, and Add-A-Younger-Brother put them in her pocket with the slim packet she had taken from his pocket.

Then the hoofs of Billy's fleetest pony struck the stones, and he drew the daughter of Su Quong-Lo to his heart, and told her that the God of "the churches" would bring him back safely to her before many days; and she saw him leap upon the wall, and through a hole in it she watched him mount and ride away. Then she went into her father's house, weeping.

As Hesketh, riding slowly to avoid notice, left Tien-Tsin, he felt that the odds were against him; that spies were probably at his heels, and that a terrible death awaited him if he were caught.

But the little fellow rose to the situation, and presently ventured to quicken his pace. Striking a fusee, he pulled out his watch; it had stopped at the very instant he had last looked at it. He opened the inner case, and found the hairspring broken. The needle of his little sweetheart had been nimble and efficacious under the eye of the Fourth. He now put spurs to his horse, for suddenly mule-hoofs thudding the spongy mud in his rear cut dully through the silence. He deflected to the plains; then, not being followed, back again to the highway; a pause, and in the mist and the gathering dark he not only heard the rise and fall of many riders, but the raw laughter from Chinese throats. The wind was with the pursuers; also with the pursued; it bit into his flesh as he flew. He glanced around and saw the gleams from a dozen lanterns in his wake; he pressed the pony's flanks, laid his mouth between his ears; encouraged, begged, and swore, as over the ancestral tombs on the edge of the wide marshes, across ditches, deep pools, and sluggish streams, he sped on his way to save five thousand lives. The moon came out, and by its favor he knew it could lack little now of

midnight. A pistol-shot, triumphantly alone, whistled out above a sudden, sullen, mighty surging roar. Billy's beast reared on its haunches in the wild waste of waters. Like a flash, although almost blinded, he turned, heading back for Tien-Tsin, as quickly also did his pursuers. Once again he heard their horrible chattering laughter somewhere abreast of him. At their heels the relentless rush of the waters; for Billy, death one way or the other seemed sure. He plucked at his inside pocket for the despatches, intending to destroy them; but he drew out an empty hand; the packet was not there.

As the dawn peeped over the round hills ahead of him, a long spear struck Billy's pony into a last frenzied spurt, and it dropped dead under its rider at a spot on the bank of the Pei-ho where it bends to crawl under a bridge; a spot of inky mud, of flow that was steady as yet. The sluggish stream bore on its brown bosom something which it cast at Billy's feet.

.

After Su Quong-Lo had seen his hirelings start he returned to his daughter, whom he found still embroidering on the longevity pil-

ows against her marriage with Excite-the-clouds. He asked her for the packet which he had taken from the foreign devil's pocket; ut Add-A-Younger-Brother replied that she id not know where it was; that she had for-otten; had mislaid it; had given it at once to er honorable father, and Su Quong-Lo waxed ngry and threatened his child; also coaxed, nd attempted to bribe; but all to no purpose. He then became furious, for the Prince had romised him a large sum of money for the reat General's despatches, and finding him-elf balked, he seized his go-away child by the rms and bound her hand and foot with cords. She made no outcry; from the first she had nown what her fate would be; Billy's little eathen sweetheart had long since counted the ost, and did not shrink from paying it. Her ather took a second ball of strong cord, and, vith trembling fingers and cursing lips, he wound it tightly around and around the small hroat of his victim; then he went out and tied ne end to the trunk of the beautiful ash-tree, nd he ran back again, pulling as hard as he ould at the other.

While he pulled, Add-A-Younger-Brother

thought of several things in a flash; the sacred peach-tree, the cock, the tiger that would gnaw her soon, but above, in, and through all else of Billy, until her quivering body gave up her heroic soul.

The merchant, once assured that his child was dead, picked her up, threw her across his shoulders, carried her down the long garden where she had played, to the river, and having thrown her into the water, went back into his house. There he sat on a stool until near daybreak, and then retraced his steps to the garden end where his boats lay, loosened one, got in, and paddled up stream, the intention of course now being to "save his face" by an apparent search for a strayed child. Such is the unaccountable nature of this people, that while the law and custom endorsed the murder, he still felt called upon to enact a role which would cheat no one, and which he trusted would result in nothing; since, if he found the body, the undesirable expenses of a funeral must be met!

He came to the bridge at the bend just as the sun rose; his boat stuck, and as he swung it around, he came face to face with Billy Hes-

keth bending above the body of Add-A-Younger-Brother; carefully, with tense bloodless lips and gentle fingers, unwinding and untying the cords from about her throat. Hesketh looked up and met the placid gaze of the father fixed upon him in a contemplative and mildly interested stare.

Billy, grateful for the sight of any human face, pointed to Add-A-Younger-Brother, and said to her father: "Lend me your boat."

Su Quong-Lo pulled his boat up the bank, got out, and paused a second. Hesketh put his hand in his drenched pocket and gave the boatman his hire.

"I want no help," he said. "I will send the boat to the wharf at Raycroft's place." Then he added in English, which the Chinaman distinctly heard as he trotted off, "Good God! I wonder if he ever had a wife or a child?"

Hesketh put Add-A-Younger-Brother in her father's boat and paddled down to the Bund; he sent a coolie for a cart and lifted her in, and was driven to his house, and carried her to the parlor, and sent for the people to come. Before they came, when Billy was quite alone with her, he himself unbuttoned her satin

blouse against the time they should be there to wash and dress her; and there, pinned on her sacque, he beheld the sheet of red paper on which he had written the words of her request —"Look, Foot."

Hesketh held his breath a second; then, reverently, he took off the shoes of Add-A-Younger-Brother, and finding them empty, he looked at the tiny ribbon-bound feet, and discovered, between the yellow sole and its silken bandages, the despatches with which he had been intrusted.

In the graveyard of the Compound there is a small white stone on which is graven: "Add-A-Younger-Brother. Fidelity. Erected by William P. Hesketh. Gratitude."

So the go-away child of Su Quong-Lo was decently interred by the foreign devil, while her father sat in Raycroft's office and listened to the account of the same which Young Hopeful retailed to the clerks and the student-interpreter.

The Lie that Yan Foo Told

✝

ELIZABETH lay below the curb, spattered with mud, bleeding.

The Countess stepped from her sedan chair at the door of the Consulate. She beheld Elizabeth and uttered an exclamation of disgust and horror, at the same moment administering a kick to Elizabeth with the toe of her dainty boot.

Elizabeth looked up at the Countess with her great brown, beautiful eyes and groaned.

The boy at the window of the Consulate cried out to his governess:

"Look, Fraulein Werther, look! I beg of you, quick; is not that, then, the one of the showman's dogs which only last week exhibited for me in the courtyard, and I named her Elizabeth myself, after our lost Empress in

Austria, because she was so beautiful in the eyes and so docile?"

Fraulein Werther answered: "Yes, indeed, Master Wilhhelm, you are in the right."

"Then," cried the boy, pulling the bell-rope, "let Chin Fang at once bring Elizabeth into the kitchen, feed her, dress her wounds, make her warm and comfortable; and, since the showman has discarded her because she is hurt, I myself will adopt her if she lives!"

Chin Fang picked up Elizabeth, while the Countess tripped into the drawing-room and made merry with the boy's mother and her friends. Watched languidly by the little policeman Yan Foo, who habitually promenaded up and down before the Consulate four times a day, the servant carried the dog into the kitchen.

Yan Foo smiled; he thought a blow on the head would have been wiser, and he highly indorsed the kick of the Countess, whom he had remarked because she was a stranger.

Presently he passed into the kitchen of the Consulate, too, was refreshed with tea, and found out that the Countess was the newly arrived sister of the Russian Consul and that

every one so far thought her the most amiable and lovely lady in the foreign quarter of Tien-Tsin. It was quite in order for Yan Foo to elicit these particulars, since he was in reality a well-trusted member of the Chinese Secret Service, and merely masquerading as an ordinary policeman protecting the Consulates, when his actual business was to watch the foreign devils with his own eyes and all those of other people that he could buy or steal.

With the Chinese the apparent is always the least of anything; the hidden is ever the most; and the resolute endeavor of the Celestial Secret Service man is to unearth the under side of every body and thing which chances to strike his imagination.

The Countess possessed "atmosphere";—at least so said all the delightful people in the quarter, who were united to a man and a woman in their admiration of the acquisition at the Russian Consulate. This "atmosphere" of the Countess' also appealed to Yan Foo, so much so that he found himself each reception day at the various houses, standing at the curb where he knew her chair must stop; he discovered himself inhaling the delicate per-

fumes with which her garments were saturated, gazing into the depths of her brilliant light-blue eyes, peeping at her little feet, and enjoying the rustle of her silks and satins.

Every one liked the Countess; the boy entirely forgot that she had kicked Elizabeth, and worshiped her as only a child can worship an attractive woman.

Elizabeth herself, recovered of her wounds (she had been run over by a Pekin cart at full tilt and tossed into the gutter for dead by her showman owner as he quitted the precinct), fat with ducks' wings and chicken breasts, silky with scented soaps, and jingling with a splendid silver collar, had also forgotten the kick, and was ready, not only to lick the Countess' hands, but her pretty feet, or her scarf or veil, or any of her belongings, more especially her bag, in which she carried sweetmeats of a flavor most pleasing to the palate of Elizabeth.

Yan Foo, too, was now great friends with Elizabeth. When he came round to the kitchen, ostensibly for tea, but in reality to spy and learn, he would pat her head, pinch her long ears, and allow her to lap from his bowl.

"Elizabeth is no thoroughbred," he said to

the Consul's valet, "but a mongrel; yes, as we say in China, it is the royal blood for giving orders, the mixed strain for carrying them out —up high, plans; down low, actions and intelligence. Ha, Elizabeth, I will make a policeman of you, too, some day!"

And all the servants laughed at Yan Foo, who at that moment heard the Countess laughing in the parlor, and presently singing a chanson such as he had heard at the Acacias in Paris; for Yan Foo was well traveled and had done much work in foreign lands for his country; and it was not until after the trouble at Tien-Tsin that he was placed in so apparently insignificant a position as his present one —that is, insignificant in the eyes of the foreign devils; to his own Government, not even the talents of Yan Foo were too precious to engage in the pious task of ferreting out the intentions of the Consuls and laying embryonic trains for their future massacre.

It is not to be thought what these dignitaries would have done to Yan Foo had they known how his heart fluttered whenever he came near the Countess; how this very evening, as he stood in the square hall of the Consulate to

protect the peace of the house during the wedding festivities of the boy's sister, he wished he were even Elizabeth, to receive a caress from the Countess, a sweetmeat from her hand. The eyes of Yan Foo followed her as she glided from the drawing-room, holding a torn shred of lace in her fingers; as she mounted the staircase, Elizabeth pattering after her, she called down to her brother, the Russian Consul, in French, which Yan Foo understood pretty well:

"I seek a pin, my friend. See how I have torn my dress in the dance with your spur."

Then Yan Foo, not able to restrain himself any longer, taking a pin from his jacket flap, rushed up the stairs halfway and without a word, salaaming profoundly, presented it to the Countess.

She shook her handsome head angrily.

"No!" she said, still in French. "Heathen beast, go away! I want none of your pins."

But Yan Foo did not go away. As the Countess and Elizabeth ran up he, too, walked up and into the large apartment where many of the splendid silver, lace and furniture gifts for the boy's sister were set out. He was in the trail of the perfume from the Countess'

ribbons, and, notwithstanding her insolence, he enjoyed this, as well as a speculation on the value of the bride's presents.

Soon he heard the Countess cross the bare floor of the next room; he also went to the door of this room and stood quietly, for he was still computing, not only the probability of beholding the Countess again in a minute, but likewise the value in taels of all these things should any one take them away; the pockets of Yan Foo's jacket now bulged out with the tissue papers he had picked thriftily up from the floor.

Suddenly Elizabeth—it must have been she, since there was no other dog here—began to bark furiously. No one had ever heard her bark before. Every one had remarked that she was indeed a dumb beast, since she only whined and yelped a very little.

Then Yan Foo, starting, one might almost say guiltily, heard the Countess cry beneath her breath, in French:

"Horrible little devil of a dog! What do you mean? Down! I say! down! Here! some sweets that you like!"

But Elizabeth merely barked the louder,

and even snarled, at which the Countess uttered a small shriek. Yan Foo, squeezing his pockets to his sides, jumped out of the room and found the Countess at the threshold of the other room, with Elizabeth standing erect on her hind legs, showing all her teeth, her brown eyes very fierce, barring the egress of her companion completely.

It took Yan Foo but two seconds to spring upon Elizabeth, seize her silver collar, wrench her from her post, beat her with his fist until she howled, then to seize the beautiful bare arm of the Countess and thrust her on her path to the staircase.

"Go!" he exclaimed. "There is danger in the dog. Go!" for Elizabeth jumped and tugged in Yan Foo's grasp and snarled with rage and discomfiture.

The Countess, beholding Elizabeth safe in the hold of Yan Foo, feeling the touch of the yellow hand on her white flesh, turned actually livid as she shook herself free.

"Impious viper!" she said in French, between her pretty white teeth, as she rubbed her arm with her perfumed handkerchief.

"How do you dare to touch me? What do

you do here? The dog is my friend; she merely plays with one who adores her, while you, heathen that you are! beat the poor, inoffensive brute!"

For now again Yan Foo was obliged to strike Elizabeth in order to keep her from pouncing, doubtless in a romp, on the Countess.

Yan Foo could not reply to the Countess relevantly, for the reason that it was no part of his present vocation to make known his acquaintance with any language save his own; he merely stared at her as she rubbed her arm, and, notwithstanding the perfect stolidity of his moon face, he would have liked at that moment to have let Elizabeth from leash and watch her eat up the Countess' handsome face.

At this moment the boy, attracted by the unaccustomed sound of barking, came running with his governess, and as the Countess, adjusting her petticoats, sailed away down to the wedding reception he took Elizabeth off to the study room and shut her in, and then returned to scold and threaten Yan Foo.

But Yan Foo had left the Consulate with but two ideas in his mind—one to get away

where he would never see the Countess again; the other to spend all he had in burning prayers and incense to the genii that they should send a frightful vengeance upon the Countess. For Yan Foo, like most of his race, was patient and had borne the abuse of this lady now for six months, since she arrived at her brother's; but when he saw her rubbing off the touch of him who had saved her from the teeth of an angry beast, his patience was ended. Regardless of his post, of his pay, of the priceless wedding presents he was there to guard, Yan Foo, his jacket pockets much distended still, with the tissue papers probably, left the Austrian Consulate unseen by any one, as it afterward transpired.

It had been a beautiful wedding, much the finest ever made in Tien-Tsin; the guests sent off the married pair under a shower of rice and Chinese slippers and confectionery, and then betook themselves to dancing and feasting. None so gay as the Countess as she waltzed up and down the long drawing-rooms in the arms of her brother, the Russian Consul; her laughter could be heard the highest, as every one pledged the newly wedded in cups of spark-

ling champagne; her voice the merriest as she sang for the other guests little songs of love, in French, Russian, English. Even when she was being handed into the Pekin cart to go home her eyes shone more brilliantly than ever before, her lips lilted out the most rollicking chanson yet, as she laid her head on the arm of her brother, the Consul; and Elizabeth, shut up in the study room, yelped in dismal concert and stood in the lamplight up in the window, looking down and scratching the panes in impotent rage.

Well: the next day at tiffin the Countess came over to learn how fared the sweet bride's mother and to be shown, too, those treasures of linen and lace in the corbeille which she had not seen yesterday. Alas! Not only was there the sadness incident to the going away of a petted daughter of the house, but—what do you think! can it be imagined! the jewels! the splendid parure of diamonds, rubies, pearls, emeralds sent over to the bride by the Emperor himself was gone! stolen! taken away by some ruthless person; even the last shreds of the tissue papers bearing the stamp of the Court jeweler in Vienna were gone, while noth-

ing remained but the elegant empty velvet and satin cases!

The Countess, when she heard this, almost swooned in the parlor; restoratives had to be administerd to her; when she revived, it was to hear the half dozen ladies of the household, all together, relating their theories of the theft.

"What do you think Countess?" finally one took breath and inquired.

Just then, while the Countess was sadly shaking her head and rolling her eyes to the ceiling, the Consul entered and said:

"Where, then, is Yan Foo, the policeman?" And the Countess sat still and looked more sadly at the carpet.

No one had seen Yan Foo since yesterday.

Who saw him last, then?

Why was he not here to-day?

What was the use of a policeman, then, since jewels of priceless value could be taken away from a foreigner's house?

Send at once to the Bureau of the Authorities and demand an explanation.

While a servant went on the errand, surmise was rife. It was, indeed, the Consul himself, and no one else, who said:

"It looks very badly for Yan Foo. By my faith! it does. Did any of you ladies see him upstairs yesterday?"

"Oh, yes," replied the Countess, very thoughtfully, putting her head to one side.

"Yes? When? How? Let us hear!" came in a chorus of feminine voices, at last stilled since some one could tell them something novel.

The Countess graphically, in a pained and reluctant voice, rehearsed the encounter between herself, Yan Foo, and Elizabeth.

"There is nothing else to be surmised than that the sagacious animal had seen Yan Foo abstract the jewels prior to the advent of the Countess; that she desired to prevent him from again entering the apartment where the rest of the gems still remained; that she would have torn Yan Foo to pieces had he not held her; that Yan Foo would have killed Elizabeth had not the boy opportunely rescued her; that Yan Foo had stolen the precious articles; hence he would not return; that his Government would screen him to the last—but that—by the heavens! the authorities must find those things or answer for it!" So said the Consul, finishing just as the messenger returned.

The word brought was, that "Yan Foo had been sent to Hongkong that very morning and would perhaps not return soon, since he was likely to be transferred still further away. He was a blameless man, had a large family, and much needed the increase in salary which the exchange would give him."

"'Blameless!' Ha! you see," cried the Consul, his wife, and all these ladies besides, the Countess joining in, in a feeble and grief-stricken tone.

Then down the stairs came bounding the boy and Elizabeth; with a rush both came into the parlor, upsetting a tea table, and Elizabeth with a snarl and a pounce at the arm of the Countess—just saved from seizing the white flesh where Yan Foo had touched it by the strong hand of the Consul, while all the others shrieked.

Elizabeth barked loudly and struggled.

"The poor animal!" cried the Countess; "it is exactly there," pointing to her arm, "that the disgusting barbarian dared to touch my arm; Elizabeth scents his trail; she is to be admired for sagacity; I beg of you, give her these sweetmeats for me. Elizabeth! Elizabeth!"

cooed the Countess in her siren voice, while Elizabeth bit at the air, "will you not forget that the Chinese thief ever desecrated my arm? Sweet little Elizabeth! let us be the good friends once more."

But Elizabeth would not; and while her sagacity was praised she was taken yelping from the apartment.

Presently all the ladies went home, and the Consul called his secretary and wrote many letters to higher and higher authorities, while his wife wept over the lost parure of her newly married child.

.

At the end of a year one evening Yan Foo clapped his hands at the door of the Consulate kitchen; he was attired in his policeman's jacket and tall hat; he had come back from Hongkong of his own desire and asked for his old post; like many other men, Yan Foo yearned to behold once more the woman who had so enthralled his fancy and so aroused his animosity.

Chin Fang opened the door and admitted his countryman; on neither side was there surprise expressed, but merely a greeting such as

might have been twelve months before when Yan Foo was a daily visitor. He presently asked for many persons, for the Countess among them, and learned that she had long since quarreled with her brother, the Consul, who had married in the meantime; that she had quitted Tien-Tsin and gone, people said, to London, or to Moscow, or maybe it was Paris—Chin Fang was not sure. That she had come to the Consulate often? Oh, yes, but that Elizabeth the dog would always bark and snarl at her, so that it became necessary to tie up the animal whenever the Countess came —that is, of course, since the robbery.

"What robbery?" asked Yan Foo, while at the instant Elizabeth ran into the kitchen for her supper, and immediately began to greet him with affectionate licking tongue, jumps, whines of joy, and a vigorous tail.

Then Chin Fang, assisted by all the other servants, told Yan Foo of the theft of the jewels; that they had not yet been recovered; that the reward was large, and the Consul firm in his determination to have the thief caught.

Suddenly Elizabeth stopped wagging her tail and laid back her ears and showed all her

teeth, and tore from the pockets of Yan Foo's jacket all the identical tissue papers which he had so thriftily placed there the day of the wedding. She would have bitten these to shreds had not Yan Foo himself seized her by the nape of the neck and gotten the papers from her. He threw Elizabeth outside, closed the door, and began to smooth out the papers on the bench. He read, printed upon each fine sheet in gilt letters, the name of the Austrian Court jeweler, with the Austrian coat-of-arms. Yan Foo smiled a little to himself as he folded up the tissue pieces very carefully; he wagged his head as a positive devil of cunning and ferocity seemed to peep out of each of his slanting eyes. He trotted around to the grand entrance to the Consulate and asked to see the Consul himself, which was granted to him presently in the parlor. Yan Foo sat down in the beautiful armchair in which he had often beheld the Countess sitting, near the casement, and when the Consul came in, much astonished, Yan Foo said:

"I come back to Tien-Tsin and learn of the theft of the jewels of your daughter, honorable and powerful master. I pray you to give Yan

Foo a list of these, describing them fully. I pray of you and your honorable little son to lend me the dog Elizabeth for a time; I pray of you to see the authorities to-morrow morning; they will rehearse to you that Yan Foo goes never on the fool journey. Then, a long time, perhaps, you will not behold Yan Foo; but I will return, and I swear to you by the tombs of my venerable ancestors when Yan Foo comes he will bring you back Elizabeth and the lost parure of your honorable daughter."

The Consul hurried to the bureau on the morrow, and was assured that the best thing he could possibly do was to grant Yan Foo's request; so, as the boy wept, and the governess shook her head, and the Consul and his wife remained puzzled, Yan Foo, the policeman, carried off Elizabeth at high noon in his arms, where she docilely lay, since the tissue papers of the Court jeweler and their faint, inscrutable perfume were just then locked up in a small iron box in the bureau; the key was on a fine chain around Yan Foo's neck.

The following Saturday Yan Foo, Elizabeth and the iron box, with other luggage, set off

for no other place than London. In that town he was regarded at the Victoria Hotel as nothing less than a Mandarin, since his garments were most splendid in satin, silk, and embroideries; his greatest care was for an iron box, which he deposited in the safe, but made a practice of looking at once at least every twenty-four hours; Elizabeth, it was rumored, was destined to be served up as a ragoût whenever European fare palled and the Mandarin should feel an ungovernable appetite for something in his own country's line of food.

Yan Foo remained in London during the whole season, not leaving a theatre or public place unvisited; haunting photograph shops, milliners', haberdashers', and the like, and always attended by the docile, beautiful-eyed Elizabeth. Presently Yan Foo started off for Russia; he visited St. Petersburg and Moscow, where, indeed, any one who was in these places last year can testify that the "Mandarin and his dog" were familiar features at every sort of café, theatre, show, shop, and gallery.

Then, in the spring, Yan Foo said to Elizabeth one pleasant morning, as he inspected the little iron box:

"Now, Elizabeth, we will cross down toward the south and enter the City of Paris, where I have not been since I caught there the Prince Tchun and took him back to China to be cut up in pieces on account of the murder of his best friend; but, Elizabeth, I remember Paris very well; oh, yes."

So the Mandarin and his dog quitted Russia, and in a short time were well established at the Hotel Bellevue, in the Avenue de l'Opéra.

"Now, Elizabeth," said Yan Foo, opening the iron box and shaking out the tissue papers before the nose of the animal, as he had a habit of doing once in the twenty-four hours:

"It is not unlikely that we are somewhere near the end of our travels. Ha! you are still a faithful beast!" for Elizabeth snarled and growled at the paper scraps just as actively today as she had eight months since in the kitchen of the Austrian Consulate in Tien-Tsin. "Now we will go out."

Here in Paris in one week Yan Foo had become a personage — in miniature, it is true, but nevertheless one; and his renown as "the Mandarin with the dog" had spread from the

boulevards and shops into the Coulisses and many other such places.

He took Elizabeth everywhere with him, even paying for her admission to the cafés chantants and open-air pavilions de concert, where a fee invariably admitted the animal to a chair, or at the least a spot at her master's feet. It was so droll that in a short while "the Mandarin and his dog" were even much desired as patrons of these places, since a crowd followed in their wake!

One evening Yan Foo, in his yellow and blue silk garments embroidered with gold, his pigtail hanging, his fan in his hand, Elizabeth at his heels, sauntered into the Café des Cygnes. He sat down and drank a little wine, while some charming young ladies near by fed Elizabeth with the sweets she liked; the air was soft, the breeze agreeable, the music languishing—for Yan Foo, be it remembered, was of a European education, and therefore suited in the tune. Then the musicians ceased for a moment, taking up presently a more plaintive motif, but with a refrain so reckless, so gay, so brilliant as to make everybody feel quite happy; then it was that she whom all Paris

last year called "la Divette des Divettes" stepped out upon the stage and sang.

Yes, to be sure, it was the Countess; and Yan Foo, like many another uncivilized or civilized man, heaved a sigh of rapture as he once more beheld the woman whom he had worshiped, hated, worshiped once more. He forgot her scorn, her spurn, her anger, as that wonderful "atmosphere" enveloped him as with a mantle.

But Elizabeth?

As Yan Foo's fan waved back and forth, as his almond eyes shut in the image of the Countess singing, Elizabeth with one leap left the pleasant young ladies, cleared the orchestra, up on the stage, snarling, her teeth fastened in the cheek of the Countess, while the music (never to be daunted even in the face of death in a theatre) played on; women shrieked, fainted; men shouted. Every one cried out "Mad dog!" The gendarmes hurried in. Yan Foo dashed up to the stage and seized the animal, covered now with the Countess's blood, as she had torn from the white throat and arms the splendid parure of jewels which the Emperor had sent nearly two years ago now to the Consul's daughter.

"Kill the brute!" they screamed.

But Yan Foo shook his head; with one hand he held Elizabeth; with the other he supported —since the rest were all too much afraid—the bleeding Countess.

"Ah!" they cried, "but it is sad; the beauty of la Divette spoiled forever; she will never sing at the Café des Cygnes again; no. But it is a romance, eh? You remember she was in China once, eighteen months since? To be sure! The Mandarin? Ah, well, what will you! Such is life!"

For it was Yan Foo only who was willing to take the Countess to her home, first securing the jewels and putting them in his pocket, and securely tying Elizabeth with a strap borrowed from the trapeze on the stage. It was, indeed, Yan Foo who sent the terrified servants for the surgeons; Yan Foo who washed away the blood from the Countess's face, neck, and arms, who stooped, for the Countess was quite unconscious, and placed, not only his hand, but also his heathen lips, on the very spot on her arm which she said he had desecrated so long ago.

The surgeons came.

"Well," they said, "it was but a question of a very little time. The anodynes would keep madame from suffering; let her relatives and friends be summoned, let their own fee be paid, since it was the Countess's custom of late; her credit was execrable, and, what will you! People must live!"

Yan Foo paid the fee; Yan Foo administered the anodynes; Yan Foo summoned the relatives and the friends, aided by the servants, who then all went away, since their wages were overdue.

But the relatives and friends never came. "What will you A person bitten by a mad dog is dangerous, and, besides, the servants said that it must be supposed the money-lenders had seized the jewels of the Countess at once, for she arrived at home without them."

And Yan Foo gave her the anodynes all through the hours she lived, while Elizabeth snarled and howled and tugged in the anteroom. And Yan Foo closed the Countess's eyes and followed her to the grave, and went back and untied Elizabeth and returned to the Hotel Bellevue, put the jewels in their tissue

papers in the iron box, and started for China with Elizabeth.

.

When he reached Tien-Tsin he put on his old policeman's dress and walked to the Consulate.

"Here," he said to the Consul, handing him the box and pointing to Elizabeth, "are the jewels of your married daughter and the dog of your honorable son. Look at them."

The Consul looked at them.

"Here is the reward," he cried joyfully.

Yan Foo answered, "I don't want this reward; it will be of no use to me where I have to go."

"But you must have it!" urged the Consul; "and anything else I can do for you, say it, and it is done."

Yan Foo pushed back the money and shook his head.

"Yes," he replied, "there is one thing I would like to receive."

"Speak!" exclaimed the Consul.

"Your honorable permission to kill Elizabeth," and his eyes were like fire in a furnace.

The Consul laughed.

"Now," said he, "who stole the jewels?"

And he, and his wife and the boy, just entered, feasted their eyes on the splendid diamonds, rubies, pearls, and emeralds and wept for joy.

"I stole them," replied Yan Foo.

And while the others stared, it was Elizabeth who licked his hand even while he thrust her away.

Fifteen Donkeys and a Half

✝

MAMZELLE was born in Chastel-en-Bois, ıt her father having been a Yankee who ıme over the border, wooed, won a Canadian ife and settled in the quaint little village, ere inhered in his daughter the American ıirit of exploration and progress as well as e French flavor of archaicism. Mamzelle twenty-four—a shameful age for any hastel-en-Bois girl to confess it—remained ngle, and forthwith, undaunted by spinster-ood, armed cap-à-pie with much lore from l the ladies' periodicals she had laid hands ı from the States, thirsting with the un-ıenchable longing to be up and doing, which 'en thirty years ago had stealthily crept over .e dividing line between the Republic and ıe Kingdom, packed her box, took her sav-

ings from chicks and pigs and set forth for Daintree's Corners, the town forty miles away, followed by the prayers of Father Bondents, of her aged mother, of, in short, the whole village, minded to learn millinery and see the world.

Every year Mamzelle came home bringing fashions, now from Daintree's Corners, soon from Boston, later from New York itself! Presently whence, think you? Paris! Hold, but this was magnificent. Mamzelle had set her foot on the soil of *la belle* France; she had beheld the tomb of Napoleon; she fetched back with her silken hose for Father Bondents, a cap of real lace for the B. V. Mary who stood in the wooden niche outside the church in the garden, a brocade apron for her mother, sugarplums made in the Palais Royal, and — a bonnet made in the Rue de Rivoli!

By and by the good mother died, and the farm was neglected and fell to ruin; the cows were sold and the cow-stables fell asunder; weeds grew up and choked the timothy; panes were broken, the well-sweep rusty, the paths grown over, and the chimneys crumbling, for Mamzelle never came back any more to Chas-

tel-en-Bois, but report said had a shop in Burlington, and now crossed to France once each year! To think of such extravagance; such wanton waste. To the mind of Fifi Jolicoeur, Mamzelle's old-time playmate, not yet married, or even betrothed, to Doctor Erasmus, who had been silently courting her, lo! this quarter of a century, the inordinate riotousness of such conduct seemed inexplicable.

"To get the new fashions in bonnets! *Tiens!* every season! Did not she herself wear the bonnet which she had bought at Daintree's Corners when she was twenty? What could any one want with new hats once a year? The worldly proclivities of some people were only to be prayed for before the statue of the excellent S. Joseph, who at the same moment can always be propitiated with reference to tardy or timid suitors."

But presently Mamzelle was coming home, and for good. Yes, it was true. She had (she wrote to M'sieu Petitclerc, the advocate) sold out her shop in Burlington, for a good price; she had made her last voyage to *la belle* France; she desired to enjoy the rest of her life in her native place; she should bring this

time a fichu of Valenciennes to match the cap for the statue of the B. V. Mary, likewise a wreath of Paris roses for the Infant Jesus, combined with leaves washed with real silver! and further, a rosary of amber and ivory beads to hang upon the arm of the statue of the pious S. Joseph himself!

Then Mamzelle came home to Chastel-en-Bois, and everybody was glad, especially the idle carpenter and painter and the village louts who lived by doing chores. For Mamzelle was the soul of thrift and keenness and quite up to the date of 1870, quite a-bristle with the equality of the sexes and the innate capacity of her sex for *les affaires* quite other than those of the heart.

Mamzelle, in brief, while in no way desirous of proselytizing, still imagined that the force of a tidy example like her own might not be lost upon her fellow townspeople.

She soon had the old farm-house spick and span with fresh white and green paint, the lands tilled, the chimneys rebricked, the paths laid, the well cleaned, and the cow-stables neat from one end to t'other.

"What then, *Chèrie*, will you do with the

cow-stables?" queried Fifi Jolicoeur, as she sat dressed in her very best gown and bonnet, veil, mittens and reticule of a long-passed mode, tall, angular, nodding, knitting.

"I shall buy cows, raise calves, make butter and cheese," replied Mamzelle. "It is not to be thought that because I have saved a little — a very little — I must sit idle. The good God would not be pleased with that. The talent must never be hid. It must be in evidence. Cows are cheaper to buy in the market in Boston than here. I can save more than the transportation. I am going to Boston to select ten to begin with. I leave tomorrow!"

"*Tiens!* and you only returned here from New York two months since." Fifi's small eyes bulge, the ringlets shake against her wrinkled cheeks, her pink feather, half a meter long, nods above her brow. "To Boston to buy cows! But that is singular, and dozens of these beasts browsing within a mile."

"But, my dear friend," cries Mamzelle, "it is the breed, the breed, that one who embarks in a business must look to; just as when I sold the hats, I must get my models in Paris. Ah!

there is no place like France, my adored Fifi, for both the bonnets, the bonbons, the animals of all kinds, cows, horses, donkeys —"

"Donkeys!" exclaimed Fifi.

"Assuredly, you should see them. To ride one is entirely satisfying. At Trouville, Deauville, along the Riviera, where you will! Queens, empresses, ride upon them in ascending the mountains or promenading the seashore. And they cost nothing to keep, they are hardy, long-lived. It has been my dream to introduce them here in my beloved Canada. But what will you!" shrugging her plump shoulders. "I computed the transportation from France to Chastel-en-Bois, and found the cows were the most reasonable, so — we must all continue to walk save Doctor Erasmus, when he bestrides his mare, now just almost my own age — and yours."

"*Tais-toi, méchante!*" cries Fifi, putting up a warning finger and glancing around in terror. Every soul in the village knew Fifi's age to be nine-and-forty, but it would have killed her to have heard it said.

Therefore as may be seen by the above, Mamzelle went down to the States to buy

cows; she had a little business to transact in New York first, which being accomplished, she took the boat to return. On arriving at Fall River, as she picked her way along the wharves, seeking out a dealer to whom she had been recommended, wandering into strange, unclean juts of little piers, around queer corners, poking and peering, finally at the end of a dingy quay, at the rickety posts of which was moored a canal-boat, Mamzelle's sharp eyes encountered this sign nailed on a shingle, which was in turn tied with a bit of ribbon tacked to a lath and stuck between two of the planks:

"Fer zaile sheape. 15 Donks and ½. Aply heare."

Mamzelle read twice over; she nodded sagely to herself, smiled, even winked at her own pleasant thoughts, and then she uttered a call for attention, as the spot was lonesome and not a soul to be seen.

Immediately, however, from the cabin of the canal-boat, at the door, appeared a shock of yellow hair; voices were heard in the sharp clucking Spanish that Mexicans speak; the yellow-headed one disappeared and a black-

haired man, small, lithe, handsome, dirty, with much glitter in the way of studs, chains and rings came forward from somewhere and saluted Mamzelle in surly fashion.

Then Mamzelle pointed with her Parisian parasol to the sign, smiled, spoke:

"Where are the donkeys? How many?"

And the surly Mexican turned into a merry, light-hearted one as he replied:

"Just here, Señorita, fifteen and ze one leetle one, babie, so small; fine, grow up excellent. You will see?"

Mamzelle would see.

In short order the animals, a bit thin in the ribs and shanks, but in good condition otherwise, were led out on the deck of the canal-boat for her inspection, and trotted up and down, the ridiculous little colt bobbing at its mother's heels, while the Mexican, voluble as most Latins, answered all Mamzelle's queries to her entire satisfaction.

"'Gentle!' oh, but behold! Was ever such a complete docility met with? 'Kick!' Alas, for their own good even, these animals did not know how!" And their owner administered to one of them a sound drub on the

hindquarter without the least result. "'Eat much!' by the soul of a departed mother and several saints, almost nothing. 'Of good stock!' The very same, identical, as those now employed in the palace of the Escorial for the pleasure jaunts of the 'young King and Queen!' 'Old!' As Santiago must witness, not one of them over three years. 'The price!' Oh! *Carramba*, the Señorita must indeed believe that these intelligent and worthy beasts were being given to her at the sum of five dollars apiece with the child donkey thrown in!" The Mexican shook his head sadly and sighed in consonance with a deep and mournful groan proceeding doubtless from his comrades within the cabin.

Mamzelle, although that usually reckless quantity a woman into whose mouth has fallen the fruit she has long coveted, still was shrewd. She offered three dollars apiece for the fifteen donkeys, the half to be thrown in, and promptly secured them, although with much sorrowful exclamation and the invocation of the entire calendar to vouch for the fact that this was a gift to the Señorita and not a sale.

Mamzelle hired the Mexican to drive the animals to the railway yard; engaged their passage on the freight-train; saw them put in the car with a quantity of hay and carrots, betook herself about her Boston business, and arrived the next day at Chastel-en-Bois, where forty-eight hours later her live stock also made its appearance.

To say that the village gossips were put into a state bordering on madness is to draw but a mild picture of affairs in Chastel-en-Bois.

"Donkeys!" M'sieu Petitclerc, small, wiry, fiery, impetuous, rolled his eyes, lifted his shoulders, waved his hands and predicted that Mamzelle's fortune would soon disappear.

Doctor Erasmus, shaking with jolliness and fat, laid a forefinger aside of one winked-up eye and said:

"Hold! It is fifteen donkeys, you say? No! no! there are sixteen! and I had fancied Mamzelle of a strong, even masculine mind. Ah, well!"

Father Bondents, alone, walking up and down in the garden, his *béret* on his head, his breviary in hand, skirts outpuffed by the breeze as he waddled, remarked:

"It is perhaps well. I have seen these animals put to good use in my youth in Gascony. Our old Curé always rode one — I myself may be glad to do the same; my legs begin to stiffen, and my parish covers twenty miles around!"

Fifi said nothing, but she thought a great deal of the Queens who rode such beasts in France, and secretly wondered how Doctor Erasmus would think she, in her best gown, would look atop of one of them, on Sunday, say, ambling to the mass, or when the Fair day came around, perchance — or at Easter. Blessed S. Joseph! Could it then be that fired by the sight of so much grace, intrepidity and novelty, this dear Erasmus would indeed gather courage to put into words that which she knew lay deep in his heart?

Fifi actually dreamed of herself in a saddle to the tune of a wedding-bell, and envied by every woman in Chastel-en-Bois.

Mamzelle meantime knew as well how to make the market for donkeys as she had for hats. Her animals were stabled where erstwhile the cows had reigned. The stalls were newly whitewashed, the roof patched, the doors rehung, for the winters in Canada are

severe and not a blade of pasture after November to be found even by the sharpest toothed donkeys of the fifteen and a half. Mamzelle laid in plenty of hay, and she had raised enough carrots, cabbages and the like to keep the stock until May; besides, she calculated to sell at least four of her beasts very shortly.

To this end she invited her friends to come in one fine brisk Sunday afternoon to behold the donkeys in their stalls. Each one neatly labeled on the edge of the manger, thus: "Napoleon, Eugénie, Queen Victoria, Lafayette, George Washington, Marie Antoinette, the Dauphin," who sidled near his mother, all ears and legs as yet, but promising to grow up into a stout fellow. It may be observed that there was strict impartiality displayed in the naming of the donkeys, so that the feelings of no one should be hurt at lack of compliment to either British, American, old French or Imperial proclivities.

Mamzelle herself, to manifest the extreme gentleness and aptness of her new possessions, had one of her new saddles put upon Marie Antoinette, mounted and rode around the

large flat meadow adjoining the stable yard, to the intense admiration and wonder not only of her guests, but of many Sunday strollers from nearby villages.

In the end, Father Bondents bought Marie Antoinette for ten dollars; on Tuesday Doctor Erasmus purchased Napoleon for fifteen, and on Wednesday Fifi Jolicoeur, quivering with excitement, became the owner of the Empress Eugénie for a like sum, with a dozen private riding lessons thrown in, to be administered jointly by Mamzelle and her hired man in the recesses of the big barn.

By and by M. Petitclerc bought Lafayette, and by Ash Wednesday Queen Victoria also, for his wife; so that thus Mamzelle had already, before spring, disposed of five of her purchases at a snug profit, there remaining to her Louis Sixteenth, whom she used herself, Queen Margherita, Victor Immanuel, Don Carlos, Emperor William, President Lincoln, Marshal Saxe, S. Laurent, Rose, annd Lily, not to make mention of the little Dauphin.

It was pleasant to Mamzelle to sit, spectacles on nose, in the kitchen, when the sap began to run and the first birds to return, and

behold her neighbors thoroughly enjoying the comfort and relaxation which her donkeys afforded them; also to amble out on Marie Antoinette, accompanied sometimes by Fifi on the Empress Eugénie, joined, you may be sure, by the excellent Erasmus on his rounds.

Likewise with the coming of the birds, the green blades, the ploughing time, the sprinkling of the seed in the brown upturned earth, when blossoms decked the cherry boughs and maples gave their yield of sweets, when, after the long, dreary snow harvest, the short days and bitter nights, there came also Easter, and on Easter Monday, look you, a little green cabriolet, drawn veritably by a donkey, and containing two gentlemen, a huge roll of papers in gay colors, a large pot of white paste, two huge flat brushes; there was presently much vernal joy in the whole length of Chastel-en-Bois. Wherefore?

A circus was coming! Now a circus had never yet arrived in Chastel-en-Bois, and it was much the same for the good parishioners of Father Bondents, as it would be for New Yorkers if the city of Paris were to be entirely transported in one night to Westchester

county. In point of fact no one in this village, save Mamzelle, had ever seen a circus, and it was she therefore who, pointing with her parasol to the magnificent posters on the walls of the deserted mill opposite the post-office, could best acquaint her friends with the meaning of such splendors and marvels as were hereon represented, to wit: ladies standing erect on two horses at a gallop; ladies immolating their heads in lions' mouths; elephants playing leap-frog; monkeys astride of camels; gentlemen being shot from cannons; small boys in deadly pyramids; long snakes serving as necklaces about the throats of presumable potentates; seals frisking on ponies and ponies shooting off pistols, partaking of cups of tea, playing on hand-organs, together with many other extraordinary and instructive things too numerous to mention, as well as a picture seven feet in width of the royal band of musicians, all in red coats and cocked hats, who accompanied this great show, yclept the "Running Elks"; likewise the portrait of "La bella Conchita," who performed the rôle of the heroine in the strictly moral play of "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower."

"Hold! it was then a theatre as well as a circus?" gasped Fifi.

"Of a surety!" cried Mamzelle, as she came running down the street on the second day after Chastel-en-Bois had been "billed."

"*La Scéne, Chèri*, a representation which will be, I am persuaded, as fine as that which I myself beheld at the Porte St. Martin. Listen, the messieurs in the calèche have rented my large meadow, the one adjoining the donkeys' pasture, you know? and it is there that they will erect their tent on Thursday next, the day of our blessed S. Joseph." Fifi crossed herself devoutly. "They pay me two dollars for the meadow for the day of the grand parade and the night of the entertainment; also as many as six tickets of admission. I invite you, my dearest girl, you and Doctor Erasmus, also M. and Mme. Petitclerc, Father Bondents, I myself! all of us mounted upon our donkeys! We will give éclat, respectability, fashion to the affair, as we shall halt in front of the post-office in a line, to witness the cavalcade; thence to the tent to be edified, amused, distracted with these truly first-class performances!"

"*Tiens!*" cried Fifi, "but you have the brains! the intelligence! the wit and *savoir faire!*"

Mamzelle tossed her head.

At last she would show her fellow-townsmen a portion of style; a peep at the ways of *le grand monde*, a little reproduction of those royal processions where kings and queens sat on horseback and reviewed the rank and file. Well, well! she must not be too proud; she would enter the church and humiliate herself before the statue of the B. V. Mary.

But it was nevertheless a very great and glorious day for Mamzelle when Thursday dawned.

The procession was to enter the village from the south at the fork roads, coming as it did from Lac Eternité, where it had performed the night before. It was to arrive — one should be sure to know the exact moment by the music of the band — at noon; and it is safe to say that even before eleven o'clock the good habitans from within a dozen miles began to pour into Chastel-en-Bois, mostly on foot; a few with oxen harnessed to large lumbering carts, three with horses.

Fifteen Donkeys and a Half

Mamzelle, neatly clad in her best black silk, with lace trimmed dolman, her white felt bonnet with pompons, her white kid gloves and Louis Quinze heeled shoes, sat erectly in her saddle; Father Bondents presently joined her; anon M. Petitclerc and his wife, a very little personage in a blue flowered muslin, starched stiffly, a Leghorn hat tied under her chin with yellow ribbons and a fichu of black about her shoulders. Next arrived at the coign of vantage Doctor Erasmus, with Fifi, in her violet challis, her purple sash, her bonnet with the tall pink feather, a scarf of red cashmere wound about her long, lean throat, a small parasol in her hand — for Fifi feared the light in her eyes, notwithstanding the protection afforded by the blue spectacles she habitually wore.

It marked the five minutes before high noon by the watch of Erasmus, when hark! the music began to toot! At once all the hands in the assemblage, from one end of the main street to the other, led by Mamzelle herself, commenced to clap in unison with the tune; also the donkeys now pricked their ears and with a seemingly united and fraternal inten-

tion stepped solemnly forward in a line and pawed the dusty road with their front hoofs, quite — if it may be credited — in time with the fast approaching musicians.

Behold! rounding the turn of the fork-roads, now appeared the elephant led by a Moor; a tiger in his cage; snakes coiled up comfortably on a blanket; ponies of every color; a camel with, look you, the golden-haired Señorita Conchita, who would impersonate "Rosalie, the Prairie Flower," swaying betwixt his humps; a lion with a young lady in a glass house; seals in a tub of real water; a pair of elks; the band in a gilded chariot; a cavalcade of gentlemen and ladies richly clad in velvets, felt hats, and plumes, on parti-colored steeds; the green calèche now containing, hold! the ringmaster in the tightest of breeches, brandishing the longest of whips — and *ce drôle!* Who? What?

"Be still, *mes amis*," cried Mamzelle, "this is the clown, he who will give you such amusement as never before in —"

Mamzelle's further utterance was cut short by the loud and fearful crack of the ringmaster's lash, which so affected Louis the Six-

teenth that he set up a bray, the like of which was never before heard, save the duplicates thereof which promptly followed from the fine lungs of Marie Antoinette, Lafayette and the others. These intelligent animals with one accord also now advanced in stately line and added themselves and their riders to the procession, to the intense joy and wonderment of all concerned.

"Hold!" cried Mamzelle, under her breath, to Mme. Petitclerc, "perceive how it is that even our beasts recognize that we belong to the élite!" And thus to the fanfare of the trumpets and fifes these worthy souls brought up a triumphant rear to the cavalcade of the "Running Elks" as it now wound up the street, around the corner at the hill-top, down the green lane and into the vast meadow where the big white tent and all the little white tents were pitched.

Now indeed, if there had been music before, what shall be said of the magnificent noise which hurried the populace to their seats on the tiers of benches, which caused one's pulses to beat, one's eyes to sparkle, and also the elephant, the lion, the tiger, the snakes, elks,

ponies, ladies and gentlemen to prance and rush into the great sawdust ring, which so invigorated and inspired the six donkeys with riders that these also cantered into the tent and forthwith began to go around the circle with the rest; now a little faster; again faster yet; still faster! Look you! the music playing that mad gallop for the entrée which one knows so well, and Mamzelle, purpling in the face but clinging to the ears of Louis the Sixteenth, although she dropped her reticule; Father Bondents bent double over Marie Antoinette, his reverence's *béret* cocked over one eye in strangely disreputable fashion; Fifi, her parasol collapsed under hoof, lying back in her saddle as she had been told to do in time of possible danger, her feather drooped over the whisking and joyous tail of the Empress Eugénie; M. Petitclerc, swearing, and jerking at the bridle of Lafayette; Mme. Petitclerc's two feet quite in evidence out of the stirrups, and kicking strenuously while she called upon her patron saints to stop the mad career of Queen Victoria; Doctor Erasmus, bumping in and out of his saddle each moment, beating Napoleon with his cane, pulling the mane, the

ears, while everybody else laughed, you may be sure, and declared to his neighbor that it was most entertaining, and also commendable, if novel, for these respectable personages to thus condescend for the gaiety of their friends and neighbors.

Now, indeed, in much less time than it takes to set it down, the big bass drum, hitherto an unknown quantity, was soundly beaten inside by the clown, while without, in the pasture land of Mamzelle, there arose a chorus of brays, which were answered from the tent; before one could count three, with a dash, hind heels in the air, ears laid back, there came trooping into the ring Queen Margherita, Victor Immanuel, Emperor William, Don Carlos, President Lincoln, Marshal Saxe, S. Laurent, Rose and Lily, and then figure to yourself the Dauphin, nipping at the heels of his mother, Marie Antoinette, so that her burden was only saved from a tumble in the tanbark by the timely hand of Father Bondents being laid courageously about the waist of Mamzelle!

Now galloping, rearing, tearing, the fifteen donkeys and a half pursued their way, and

these ladies and gentlemen held on by main force and by will and vanity as well, for the idea never deserted them but that all of this was accidental, if opportune.

Then into the midst of this mêlée of heels and screams rode a mailed personage on a white horse full tilt, and as he raised a warning hand the big drum ceased, a little bell tinkled, foruteen of the donkeys stood stock still, the Dauphin munched Mamzelle's reticule, full of peppermint candy, but the Empress Eugénie bounded across to a little flight of red steps, mounted her front feet securely, smelled of the gaily painted post planted thereon, and, as the bell tinkled once more, the band struck up "God Save the Queen," and all the rest of the royal, noble and excellent quadrupeds brayed and waltzed in concert about the pole. While Fifi prayed to S. Joseph and shivered, the Empress took, between her teeth, the Union Jack that fluttered on the pole, pulled it, and lo! off went a pistol, and Fifi at last fell into the arms of *le cher* Erasmus, attended not only by her old friends, but also by Señorita Conchita, the "Prairie Flower," the clown, the ringmaster, and many ladies and gentle-

men with smelling salts and plasters. At the same moment, rescuing the reticule from the Dauphin, the knight of the white horse dropped his tin visor, and handing the bag to Mamzelle, spoke thus:

"'Gentle!' You see, Señorita!" He gave utterance to a low, peculiar whistle, while the band now struck up "Yankee Doodle," and then all the fifteen donkeys sat down straightway, reckless of their riders, stuck out their hind legs precisely like a row of pussy cats, and each brayed softly as it wagged its ears.

"Eh, what will you? Ze wintair ees ver hard for ze cirque; we cannot keep all; we must sell. Come! I will buy 'em back now at two dollars apiece and fifty cents for ze half."

Mamzelle the next morning beheld the Emperors and Kings, Queens and Empresses, Presidents, Marshals, etc., also the little Dauphin, march solemnly past her windows where she and Fifi sat.

Alas! my adored Fifi! Behold the end of my enterprise! A loss of I know not how much excellent money!" Mamzelle wept.

"But calm yourself, my amiable friend,"

returned Fifi Jolicoeur. "Had it not been for your donkeys my beloved Erasmus would never, never have spoken his mind. Father Bondents remarks there is a Providence in all things."

To which admirable sentiment the Mexican gave just then a very tolerable echo in the ear of the yellow-haired Senorita Coñchita, his wife, as they rode out of Chastel-en-Bois.

The Little Blue Cat from Malta

A FATHER, a mother, three children; four sewing and button hole machines, a violin, beds, a stove, chairs, a table, dishes and the rest of it, all in one room. The man and woman both, since supper was over, and two of the children, at work, making trousers and buttonholes. The third child, a boy of ten, had a dingy dandelion in his fingers hinting that it was spring somewhere or other in the world, where his little feet had wandered that afternoon, and he hesitated an instant in the doorway, as if loath to enter the stifling place he called his home.

The father looked up eagerly, nodded at the violin hanging in its case on the wall, and spoke to the boy.

"To work! to work! little son! It is you

who will, with your music, make money, riches, grandeur for us all. To work!" and fast flew the treadles and wheels of the father's machine.

"To work! to work! little son!" echoed the mother.

And "To work! to work! little brother!" cried the two sisters in chorus, while their three machines whirred, and buzzed, and hummed, seeming to the boy to say also, "To work! to work!"

He took the violin from its case and laid it, with that gesture of infinite love one only sees when the true artist handles his instrument, under his small chin. He was a brown child, this Immanuel Yanka, brown of skin and eyes, and hair, with pale pink lips, and sharp white teeth, often hungry, and slim hands, and legs no bigger than birch saplings.

He stood up in front of the hot stove and played, and on went the hum and whizz of the relentless machines, and fastened on their stints were the eyes of Joseph Yanka, his wife and his daughters; but through their open ears to their open hearts swept the melody that the little Immanuel made with his bow, and in

some indefinable fashion each felt that in that music lay hint of their promised land for them.

Gold, greatness, splendor, food, raiment, homes, lands, horses, jewels, they saw them all pageanting in and out, among the machines and beds, and stove, and chairs, while they made buttonholes and trousers, as the boy played.

People on the sidewalk, even in their hurry, stopped and slapped the second-hand coats out of their faces to listen to the music coming from the dirty room over the clothes-dealer's shop. Among them soon a large seafaring man, with a tow-cloth bag over his shoulder; he made out the number on the open door, went in, and up, and presently stood between the beds, being welcomed by Joseph Yanka, and his wife and girls — but through it all the machines whirred and whizzed without a moment's cessation, and the boy played on, through his nods and smiles to his newly arrived uncle, until he had reached the end of his study for that night.

"Look now," said the uncle, "what I have brought Immanuel from the Island of Malta,"

with which he took from the tow-cloth bag a beautiful soft little blue cat, with twinkling topaz eyes, and a thick waving tail, and the boy received the gift with joy and fondled and caressed the little blue cat with persuasive coos and strokes.

And "Ach himmel," groaned the father. "Another mouth to be filled. Verily, my brother, captain of the sailing ship Ligarno, had little sense to bring a cat this year, since we had to murder the monkey you brought last."

And "Ach himmel," sighed the mother and the little girls, while the machines whirred and whizzed in concert.

"Tut, tut," exclaimed the boy; "soon I shall have enough for the mouths of ten cats and monkeys, since it is possible that they will hire me to play at the Volksgarten in the Bowery very soon."

And Joseph and his wife and the little girls all nodded at the inquiring glances of the uncle, as they replied further, in a breath, but never relaxing their feet from the treadles or their eyes from the seams and the button-holes.

"'Ya, it is God's truth!" screams Joseph above the babel, inside and out, of wheels for sewing and wheels for cars. "Our brother, the rabbi, is here; you see he can tell you so." The eldest of the three men enters the room clad in his gabardine, and stroking his long beard, greeting his brethren with warmth and dignity, and still the machines never stopped.

Now an odd thing happened. The little blue cat from Malta was lying on the boy's knees, and the boy was running his scales most skilfully when the rabbi came in.

The boy paused a second to bend his head for the blessing of his uncle, the rabbi, who also laid a sharp finger on the ear of the little blue cat, while the boy said:

"This is the present my uncle, the captain, brings to me in his ship."

And the others groaned.

Then the little blue cat, with an unearthly "fizz," caught the hand of the rabbi in her sharp teeth and clawed it with her nails until the red blood oozed through the grime and dropped on the greasy skirts of his gabardine.

And the rabbi smote the little blue cat till it shrieked, and the boy soothed it, and all the

rest of the family moaned and groaned, but went steadily on with their work.

"It is a good cat!" exclaimed the boy; "my honorable uncle does not know how to touch it any more than he does my violin, that is all!" and the cat purred and licked the strings of its master's fiddle, and sidled and arched its back and seemed content to lie on Immanuel's knees as he played the exercises. But the rabbi's fierce old eyes shot an ill glance into the topaz eyes of the cat.

"Sit on the bed, Brother Abraham, beside Brother Moses!" cried Joseph Yanka, as he rethreaded a needle. "Leave the chair for the rich, great man who comes up the stairs, even now."

"And who is the great, rich man?" asked the rabbi, ill pleased to have to move.

"Tush!" says the mother, finger on lip, and rising to curtsy, as do the little sisters, and the father, and the uncles and the boy, grasping the little blue cat, at the entrance of a fat, red-faced, sleek man in costly garments.

"Tush! it is the honorable gentleman, the manager of the Volksgarten, come to hear Immanuel play!"

And thus, once, for five minutes by the clock, the machines stopped their whirr — and that which neither weariness nor welcome could obtain, wealth commanded.

"The manager of the grand Volksgarten next door of your narrow synagogue, my Brother Abraham," bows Joseph, placing the chair.

"Is this the boy?" inquires the honorable gentleman. "Play!" he adds, as the child trembles, and the little blue cat from Malta perches on his shoulder, nestling back of his ear.

And all the family, led by the rabbi, motion the boy to put away the cat, but the manager, a shrewd man, who half a dozen years hence will have a syndicate of theatres, laughed aloud and said:

"Let it alone!"

Then Immanuel played, as he had never played before; and the rabbi and the sea captain gasped; and the father and mother forgot to watch the clock; and the little sisters did not remember how hungry they always were; and the manager of the great Volksgarten thought, "I have jumped into a gold mine, yea, but it is unnecessary to get excited."

When the boy came to a finish and stood rapt, eyes upturned, forgetful of his surroundings, the manager said: "Pretty fair. I will let you play for a week, beginning on Sunday next," turning to Joseph, "and I will give you ten dollars for the week for your boy's playing. But he ain't got any clothes, I s'pose, fit for a show?" shrugging his broad shoulders.

In which all the shoulders present, including the frail ones of the boy himself, joined.

"I tell you what I do!" cried the great manager. "I advance you twenty dollars to buy him a velvet suit and a lace collar, and in two weeks you have paid it all back, for I guess I take him at two weeks, eh?"

And the bargain was joyfully struck, and the manager left with the signatures of Immanuel's parents to a paper, bearing an option on the boy for one year at fifteen dollars a week after the first six weeks.

And then, as soon as the house door slammed after him, the machines went to whirring again as fast as they could, because it would be three more weeks from next Sunday before the boy's velvet suit would be paid

for or any money coming in from the Volksgarten manager.

And the captain went to the room back of the synagogue with the rabbi, and the rabbi tweaked the ear of the little blue cat from Malta on his way out, but he got nothing for his pains but another deeper scratch.

On Sunday night the boy was dressed in his velvet suit, while the machines flew faster than ever, and the rabbi and the captain came to fetch him, because the others must stay and work or else lose their job.

Immanuel took up his violin case. He also took up the tow-cloth bag with the little blue cat in it.

And the rabbi said:

"That accursed beast does not go with you!"

And the boy said: "Then I stay."

And the thick foul air was cut in slices by the "Ach Gotts!" and the "Ach himmels!" when the captain seized the cat in its bag and the boy by the arm and set forth for the Volksgarten, with the rabbi in their wake.

"Well," the manager said to his wife that night after the performance, "you shall have

the diamond ring you want. That boy and his playing and his cat on his shoulder! Holy prophets! They are worth ducats to me. Soon, you see, before Passover, he plays at the Waldorf-Astoria and I rake in his weight every week! He's mine for a solid year!"

And the manager's wife bought the ring, and still the machines whirred and whizzed day and night at the interminable seams and innumerable buttonholes, in the home of Joseph Yanka.

And the great manager of the Volksgarten was correct. In a short time the boy was to play at the home of one of the greatest millionaires in the great city. Now, by this time the manager had advanced enough money to buy Immanuel another velvet suit, and four more lace collars, and varnished shoes, and white shirts, and a gold ring, and a new violin case, and a silver collar for the little blue cat, and for a carriage once or twice, so that still they were in his debt, and the wheels flew just as fast to-night, when the boy was setting out to play in the west, as when he had started first to play in the east.

And the rabbi and the captain (who sailed

the next day) were both so proud of their nephew that they could scarcely speak, and prouder still that they were to go with him in the coach and wait outside the millionaire's palace until he had played, and fetch him home. And the rabbi patted the boy on the head and blessed him and handed him the bag of the little blue cat from Malta, and said:

"My son, you will play to-night as never before. The millionaire's lady will present you with a jewel. She will give you fine cakes to eat. Remember, do your utmost, so that soon your father and mother and sisters and poor old uncle may sit with you in high places and have servants to wait on them and silver and gold in the bank!"

And the boy said: "I will remember."

He got into the coach with the captain, but the rabbi, grasping the skirts of his gabardine with a grip like a vice, darted away, saying:

"I go back to pray for your welfare in the synagogue; go on."

Immanuel entered the palace alone, carrying his case and his bag, and the great manager of the Volksgarten was there in the ante-

room, waiting for him, as, indeed, was the audience. Immanuel took out his violin, and went out to make his bow, leaving the manager, as usual, to open the bag and let out the little blue cat, who always ran on the stage and jumped to his shoulder, at the first sound of the bow upon the strings.

The boy stood up, gazed at the lovely women, the men, at the vast, beautiful salon, with its tapestries and lights. He laid his instrument under his small brown chin, lifted his bow, drew it, pausing for a second, waiting for something—

At which exact moment also his uncle, the rabbi, stood waiting for something at the entrance to the dark, dirty alley between the Volksgarten and the synagogue; waiting for the little blue cat from Malta, which had escaped from under his gabardine just as he had lifted his knife over its head, sprung out the window, howling, and now dashed past him to the street.

"Devil of devils!" muttered the rabbi. "I will kill you to-night, by the prophets!" Picking up a sharp stone and aiming it at the cat, which was now perched on the slant roof

of the synagogue, calmly licking its paws. "You'll claw me no more; you'll feed no more, while I lack."

Whirr went the stone, just as the machines were whirring around the corner at Joseph Yanka's, and down dropped the little blue cat from Malta, and whirr went the wheels of a cable car over its head.

And Immanuel, standing in the millionaire's palace, shivered; his violin slipped to the marble floor; the strings snapped with a sharp unearthly wail; his bow rattled on top of the broken fiddle; the great Volksgarten manager rushed out holding the tow-cloth bag in one hand, a bundle of wood and feathers in the other, and the boy fell lifeless, before the eyes of the millionaire and his friends.

And still the machines whirr on and the wheels spin round and the treadles are trod, and the trousers and buttonholes are made, day and night, but the boy's bed and the cat's bag are both empty.

The Mystery at Piper's Ridge



THE July sun hung low and red, a globe in the gray of the misty sky, slanting his rays of ruby over the ripples of the inlet and up the straggling length of the village street, striking the gilded weathercock atop of Deacon Bolt's new barn into flamboyance, and lying like kindling flames from some spiritual sword across the moss-grown graves in the churchyard.

Children played there; their shrill, nerve-rending voices, rasping as only the voice of the young of the human kind can be, cut the warm air like a shower of juggler's knives as they tumbled about, living, palpitating flesh and blood, over the dust and ashes of their forefathers.

Three of the youngsters were sitting on a

mound, their little round faces and disorderly heads close together, as one spoke and the rest listened, open-mouthed, to some tale of apparently more than common interest. It paled their red cheeks and huddled them close to one another and set them shivering with mingled terror and delight.

It dowered the juvenile heroine of the adventure, whatever it might have been, with a fringing flutter of friends at her heels when she started up, as the sun's rays sank, away from the place where they sat, leaving it desolate; they followed, as eager friends ever will, the wake of one who has "had something happen."

When the children reached the spokeswoman's gate, they sidled back, for her mother hung over it with a neighbor, the two busy as bees, sipping the honey of a bit of gossip.

"They allers hev held their heads thet high, allers; and higher'n ever since six years ago, when they went out to see him to Indianapolis, they said," exclaimed the neighbor.

"I allers counted it queer the way they come home, gettin' off the train at Spruce Harbor and ridin' clear over here, 'bout eleven

miles, in the dead of night, 'stead of doin' as other folks do; didn't you?" queried the child's mother, jerking her skirt free of the twitching hand of her offspring.

Mrs. Bolt nodded darkly as she replied:

"Yes, surely; and then no livin' soul in Piper's Ridge knew they was to home till three days after they got here!"

"There must be somethin' to it somehow. Here's my Jen most frightened out of her life a-going 'cross the Ridge and through their south medder yesterday, just come twilight."

Jen's sunbonnet, at this, flattened under the hand of Mrs. Bolt and she hovered on one foot as children do when noticed.

"And them young ones of Baldwin's," added Jen's mother, "they heard the same awful bellerin' and hollerin' four days ago when they was up there, too!"

Mrs. Bolt nodded more darkly than before, as she almost upset Jen with the sympathetic patronage of her hand. She was a deacon's wife, and highly respected.

"I tell you, Mis' Forman, these folks with so many airs, and a-boastin' and a-braggin' the whole time about their brother Peter and

his grandeur — that sort of folks is bound to get a fall."

"You're right, that's what you are! and them so unsociable too, never a-joining in nothing; tho,' to be sure, they never refuse to give if they're asked."

"And never askin' a body in if they're passing by, nor having a soul to tea, nor a livin' bein' to help 'em preservin' and picklin' time, or for a quiltin', or an apple-parin'. I was saying to Deacon Bolt last night, says I, 'that may be Christian conduct, a-livin' sly-like and all kep' to yourself, as if you had something to hide, but it ain't my idea of it at all. I believe in folks livin' aboveboard, so's everybody can see what's goin' on and profit by the same!'" And the excellent and absolutely candid woman at this juncture so patronized Jen's head that the child winced, but hung on, listening, as is the custom of her years.

"That's so!" assented Mrs. Forman, with a tincture of dubiousness in her tone.

"I told Deacon Bolt, too, says I, 'Ephraim Bolt, Gecky and Susan Piper ain't never been outside their house together once to my certain knowledge since they come back six years

ago — no! I declare it's most seven — from that visit to their brother Peter.' And Deacon Bolt couldn't deny it, neither; no more can any one in Piper's Ridge!"

Mrs. Forman nodded, but apparently this last remark was too much for her intellect, and the deacon's wife, still punctuating her remarks on Jen's head, went on.

"What with noises that frighten the children to death and their unsociableness, and they both always lookin' kinder scared if a body turns their corner and speaks to 'em of a sudden, and their pride and boastfulness 'bout the riches and style of their brother Peter, and the rest of it, my 'pinion is their day of retribution ain't too far away."

"Why, Mis' Bolt, what do you mean?" cried Jen's mother, startled into inquiry, both by her friend's words and the fact that Jen had sunk on her slender young knees, sprawling, under the weight of Mrs. Bolt's eloquence.

"Don't mind me," replied the deacon's wife, retreating under the not unusual cloak of a vocal humility, by no means the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

"Don't mind me, Mis' Forman. Piper's Ridge was named for their great-grandfather, though it's true Deacon Bolt's ancestors had as good a right to it, seeing they come here first; and I s'pose they can't help bein' sot up by it; they was born so, poor things, and neither of 'em ever marryin', too. I always pity a woman that's single, I do! It's natural-like for them to set store by their brother Peter, 'specially if he's as well-to-do as they say," added the lady with that spice of reasonable doubt in her tone, always indicative of a hopefulness of spirit in an opposite direction.

"But them noises, Mis' Bolt?" said Mrs. Forman, returning valiantly to first principles. "Pride ain't a-goin' to make the rafters, and the rocks, and the square tower up to the Pipers' holler out fit to wake the dead!"

"Don't ask me, Mis' Forman, don't ask me!" The deacon's wife looked skyward, full of omen, as if she could, but would not; and her hand sought Jen's head. Not discovering it this time, the child having withdrawn a pace in her wisdom, she started on her path, still wagging her head portentously,

and leaving Jen's mother and Jen gaping after her, in the gathering twilight.

But when it was shadowy down in the village, the sun still held a last and lingering kiss on his ruddy lips for the lonely house where the Pipers lived.

It was built of stone and brick, and the bricks had been brought from over seas by the first Piper, who sailed here nearly three centuries ago; and the stone had been quarried in the hills five miles back, and the boards had been hewn in the forest hard by; and the first Piper, a mighty man, the chronicle said, and his wife, together had built the sturdy house, with its slant gambrel roof, its gables looking to the land, and its curious square tower turned toward the sea. They said the tower was built expressly so that his wife could watch from its height and catch the last tearful sight of her husband's ship when it sailed away, and the first joyful sight when it came back again, as he took his voyages between the land of their birth and the country of their adoption and love.

The house lay in a hollow, sheltered from the winds, with a green hillock of pasture land

for the sheep sloping up from the kitchen garden at the west, and with the great ridge of sand, which gave the hamlet its name, rising to the east, between it and the sea.

Dim records told that many and many a year ago, the sea, sick of its monotonous creep and crawl up to the foot of the Ridge — so far and no further — sick of getting so much and no more, of retreating each tide-time before the slim barrier of the Ridge, had all at once, without warning, one night, rushed and tumbled headlong, in defiance of the moon, over the Ridge, swirling madly up to the Pipers' house, and breaking in at every window, door, crack and crevice, had terrified the Pipers of those days out of their beds into their boats; had sucked a little child in its innocent sleep away with it; had plunged and billowed and threatened all night, and then had slunk back to its bounds, and never had transgressed again.

The old house stood firm through the siege, and the suns and the winds dried it, and the Pipers got out of their boats and came back to it, all save the one little child who had been torn away in its sleep.

The Mystery at Piper's Ridge

The square tower room was almost covered with vines, through which the windows peeped scantily, their glint of glass shrouded in curtains. The front yard was grass-grown between the stones of the walk up to the door, and weed-choked in the shell paths leading to the side porch and the well-sweep. The footsteps of two frail, slender women, one sixty-five, the other fifty-seven, and the occasional tramp of the chore boy and the visit of the infrequent neighbor were not calculated to disturb the growth of any audacious greenery.

The sun still touched the square tower room, and the crimson glow still gilded the Ridge, still slipped over and under the waves as they curled up the hard beach to the Ridge's foot.

Susan Piper sat on the side porch stringing currants. She was thin almost to attenuation; her brown eyes were full of watchfulness and darted hither and yon without stopping or stint; she was erect, proud of bearing, but the network of lines about her compressed mouth told a story of some suffering. What it was, — whether a lost lover or a lost love, somewhere back in a youth supremely lost, gone,

leaving no vestige even of its former existence on the prim rigid lineaments, save this map of wrinkles, — no one knew.

It was the face of a woman, however; of that woman who is as old as Eve, and who will be with us until sex is no more; the woman whose life is summed up in the one word, anxiety.

This shriveled little old person, sitting stringing currants, threading the ruby fruit through her brown, veiny fingers, might have stood for the representative of that forlorn and prevalent creature.

The cat stirred at the half door, letting herself out, and Miss Susan started as if she had been shot. A stick of green wood sputtered on the kitchen fire inside. She sprang up and put her hand to her ear. A flock of sand. pipers flew over the Ridge with a whirr of soft gray wings, and her head rose from the currant pan high in the air, as if scenting danger in their flutter.

Miss Gecky, baptized Angelica, came out on the porch working some butter into pats and sat down on the rocking-chair opposite her sister's.

She was smaller, thinner, even than her elder. A quaint, piteous-looking creature with a wry-shaped head and a wry-shaped nose and big, staring eyes; a being in whose unbeautiful features there resolutely remained, however, all the youth they probably ever had known.

At fifty-seven, notwithstanding that she had had the usual amount of everyday human experience, Miss Gecky still looked out at the world with the expectant, hungry gaze of a girl. There was no "it has been" pictured on her countenance. Gecky's face, with its pathetic misshapeliness, still possessed the light of that strangely beautiful illuminator, youth, unquenched, unfulfilled; all the more appealing from the fact of her wrinkles, her thin hair, her knotty hands and scraggy throat.

Everybody called her "incompetent" and "unpractical." She was used to it and didn't mind it; didn't quite comprehend what it meant, and meantime went on her way doing what came to her hand. Just now it was butter pats for Mrs. Bolt.

"I'll soon have 'em done, Susan," she said, laying another half dozen small prints in the

stone pot and covering them with the wet linen cloth.

"And I might as well take them down to-night as to wait until morning, mightn't I?" asked the younger, half doubtfully.

"I had 'lowed to go down to the store myself to-night, but it's all the same thing in the end, I s'pose, if you can carry these currants along with you, too."

"Why not?" exclaimed Gecky.

"I kinder feel 's if Mis' Bolt would come along up after 'em if we don't get 'em there before to-morrow. She's awful set about the date of doin' up her currant jell."

"I'll take 'em sure, then," returned Gecky, covering up her last layer of pats and rising.

"We don't want her coming here," she added, taking her sunbonnet from its peg on the porch wall and fetching a large basket from the kitchen for the currants.

"We don't want any one coming here," Miss Susan said, in a very low voice and with a sigh, as she glanced nervously up at the square tower room, which could be seen plainly from this angle of the porch.

Miss Susan or Miss Gecky always sat at

that angle when they sat outside the house itself.

As her elder spoke Gecky put down the basket on the bench beside the pans of ruby fruit and bent her head.

"I'm tired of it, Susan," she said in a whisper. "I'm mortal tired of it. Going on seven years since either of us took a long breath, day or night."

Miss Susan looked up and her thin lips shrank to a thread as the words came quick between them.

"Gecky Piper, you ought to be ashamed of yourself! Do you know what you're a-doin'?"

The junior shook her poor little wry head and looked pitifully out of her bulging eyes.

"You're a-wishin' for the death of one of God's creatures, that's what you're a-doin', and that is to have murder in one's heart if not the stain of blood on one's hands. That's what such talk and such thoughts is!" And a shower of blood-red fruit pattering into the pan served to emphasize Miss Susan's speech.

Gecky stood still. Her sunbonnet was hanging down her back by its loose strings in company with a wisp of her sandy gray hair.

"Is it?" she said in a dull voice, picking up the butter jar and holding the basket lid open for the last panful of currants.

Susan poured them in.

"How much was she to give you for 'em?" asked Gecky, stepping down off the porch.

"Two shil — there's Mis' Bolt now!" Susan started up with a glance of terror toward the square tower room.

"Where?" Gecky dropped the jar and the basket, and her big eyes took the same frightened flight.

"Sit down!" said Susan, authoritatively, seating herself and folding her hands primly on her checkered apron lap.

Gecky obeyed, huddling in her chair, her face the color of wax under the poke of her bonnet.

The wagon turned the corner in another moment, the fat horse breathing hard after his climb around the Ridge, and Mrs. Bolt, accompanied by her youngest, a child of ten, drew up before the door.

"I'm so glad I got here before you set out!" cried the visitor blithely, glancing at the jar and basket. "I was kinder 'fraid 'most you

might not get the currants down this evening, and I calculated to begin on my jell by seven to-morrow morning. How you both been?" she asked, finally pausing.

"Well as common, thank you," Susan answered. "How's yourself and all your folks?"

"Oh, we're all right; me and mine ain't the complainin' kind, never!"

Gecky, when she saw the little girl in the wagon, had risen and gone into the kitchen; she came out now with two sugar cakes in her hand which she awkwardly tendered to the child, who took them greedily and began to eat without so much as a word or a look. The greed on Gecky's face and the pathos of her devouring eyes, as she watched the ill-bred youngster devouring the sweets, was wonderful. All the yearning of the undying youth in her own scarred soul, all the unheeded mother love slumbering in her poor unmated heart surged and swelled in Gecky's miserable misshapen face, and so transfigured it.

"Guess I ain't got time to-night to get out and visit with you," Mrs. Bolt remarked, with that air of determined speech indicative of a mind made up beforehand. "Not as you've

asked me," she added, laughing, with a firm eye, however, fixed on the sisters.

"It's coming dark so soon now," Gecky said, recalled from her contemplation of the ill-mannered child, "and getting 'round the Ridge before the moon's up ain't such an easy task."

"We'd be pleased to have you visit, Mis' Bolt, I'm sure," Susan said, stepping in front of Gecky. "'Tain't many folks finds their way up here, and so we're gettin' kinder unsociable, me and Gecky." Miss Susan laughed with a nervous endeavor at jocularity.

"Well, now," returned the visitor, "so you are! And I'm glad you're gettin' to realize it. I've had it on my mind to speak to you, sisterly like, for a good while; and I just said to Deacon Bolt, says I, 'I'm a-goin' up to the Ridge to-night and I'm a-goin' to find out what is the matter with the Pipers.' "

A queer crashing sound put a period to Mrs. Bolt's speech.

Susan stood still, as her eyes darted to the square tower room, but her long hand clenched the porch post grimly.

Gecky started indoors.

A repetition of the noise came in another instant. It was like the crash of furniture, and then a moan, as of some dumb creature in pain.

"What's that?" demanded Mrs. Bolt, pricking up her ears.

"That's the noise what we heard, mar, what we told you about; what Mis' Piper said was the dog!" exclaimed the ill-mannered child, pricking up her ears also.

"Didn't know 's you kept a dog; do you?" she asked, looking fixedly at her hostess.

"No, we don't," Susan answered, while her withered fingers clenched tighter around the post.

"How's Peter gettin' 'long? What do you hear from him nowadays?" pursued the deacon's wife, undaunted and unmerciful.

"Oh, Peter's well. It's always 'bout the same news from him."

"I do wonder now he don't come on and make you a visit. But I s'pose Indianapolis is a good journey off."

"Yes, 'tis," replied Susan.

"You ain't never seen his wife?"

"No." Miss Susan shook her head and

her furtive glance went up to the tower room. "'S long 's we know that Peter is rich and well and happy and cared for by those that care for him, Gecky and me ain't the ones to make him come 'way here to see us."

"I s'pose his house is beautiful, now, ain't it?" inquired the visitor.

"I like it better than any house I ever see," Susan said. "Our brother Peter can't complain."

"Guess he's had to work hard for his grandeur, though. Didn't you say as how he'd retired?"

Susan slowly nodded. "Peter don't put hand to nothing. He's waited on at every turn."

Gecky, smiling, came out of the house now, and the older woman's grip on the post relaxed; a fierce light shone in her dim eyes as she turned them on her catechist, and the thin lips grew scarlet as she spoke.

"His rooms is all hung with silks and satins, and he eats off of silver, and his spoons is silver and his clothes is of the finest, and he never walks down street, and the victuals he eats is mostly chicken and pound cake and

fruit and cream and such like; and he'd no more think of fetching a pail of water for himself 'n you'd think of having somebody else do it for you!" She ended with a flinty snap in her eyes. "What was that racket, Gecky?" she turned to her sister. "Was it that pesky dog of Abel North's a-carryin' on again? I'll send him about his business and get some one else in to do the chores if he can't keep his dog out to the barn!"

"Oh!" gasped Mrs. Bolt. "Then you have got a dog about the place, after all?"

"No, we haven't," replied Susan, icily. "But the hired boy has."

"Oh!"

Mrs. Bolt gathered her currants and butter into her wagon, paid for them, and picked up the reins.

"Guess I'd better be hurrying up; looks kinder stormy now, don't it?" she said, squaring the ill-mannered child in its seat. "Hold on to them currants, Sis."

"It does look like 's we'd have some weather before long," Susan remarked, nodding.

The sisters stood beside each other and watched the deacon's wife out of sight.

When the hind wheels sunk behind the Ridge relaxation came.

"Everything's all right," Miss Gecky said, carrying in a rocking-chair.

"Didn't you have no trouble?" Susan asked anxiously, bringing in the other chair and closing the half door and buttoning it.

Gecky shook her head. "What all did she want to know?"

"'Bout Peter, of course!" ejaculated Susan, pushing back the steaming kettle with a rattle.

Gecky sat down with her elbows on her knees and her chin in her palms; she sighed, swallowing the sound, as her sister seated herself stiffly to the knitting of a man's blue woolen sock.

"Do you think," Miss Gecky commenced quickly,—stopping short and peering at Susan as the wind began to blow and the pines to sway back and forth in the yard.

"Well?" Susan said sharply. "Go on!"

"Do you think folks kinder suspect anything, Susan?"

Whatever her elder might have answered Miss Gecky never knew, for the blast blew with such a swing and might that the west

window crashed in, scattering broken glass in every direction about them.

The gale grew from second to second, whirling the sand up to the house door, tearing the trees limb from limb, shrieking in the chimney, blotting out every star, swathing the newly risen moon in impenetrable blackness, swirling the broken branches against the blinds, beating at the stone walls of the old house, and howling, as demons might howl in their orgies, round and round the hollow where it lay.

The women had shut everything tight, stuffing sheets in the broken window; then they stood at the bottom of the stairs leading up to the tower room, irresolute, the candle flickering in Susan's hand.

"Shall I go up and see?" Gecky asked.

"No use to go up's long as it's all quiet," Susan answered.

"Hush!" her sister interrupted, as the roar of the wind sounded in their ears as it never had sounded before since they were born.

It came as the wail of some gigantic spirit wrestling with its opponent, battling, struggling, half conquered, panting, gulping, gasp-

ing, and victorious at last, as, with a shriek of triumphant joy, the house trembled and the earth seemed to shake beneath it.

Above the thunderous, awful crash there came to the two women another sound — a shriek of laughter, as triumphant as the victory of the wind.

They held their breath as the candle went out.

"No use to go up," whispered Susan.

"What's that?" screamed Gecky in her thin little voice.

They both at the same instant felt the water at their feet.

They dashed back to the kitchen.

In — in at the broken window — in at the other windows — all were broken now — in at every crack and crevice and cranny crept the tumultuous, exultant sea.

"The sea 's crep' over the Ridge!" shrieked Susan.

"Where's the boat?" said Gecky.

"Tied fast to the gate post, where it's been for months. What use had we for boats?"

Together they unbuttoned the half door; together, for one second, they peered into the

lackness without. Together they sprang out, ıeir poor old feet tangling in the cruel waters ; they went.

"Go back, Susan; go back," shouted Gecky. 'Taint no higher'n my ankles yet. I'll reach ıe boat by feelin'! I know every step's well's know my name. Go back, I say!"

A giddy feeling came over Miss Susan; she ad to fall back, and then all the dormant, ever-spent youth in Angelica Piper rushed ıto activity.

She felt the raving wind beating her back; ıe felt the spray dashing in her eyes and ɔaking her to the skin; she felt the sea crawl- ıg up her legs, but for a few short, exquisite ıoments she felt, too, some use of the powers ıat were hers.

It was only a matter of about three rods to ıe gate where the boat was tied. She slipped ıe noose, and, although it did not float yet, ne tug with all her strength brought it up to ıe porch.

Susan stood there waiting, dazed, gathering er soaked skirts about her, shivering like a reed.

"Get in," Gecky said, in a voice she never ad used before to her sister or any one else.

And Susan obeyed.

They shrunk down in the boat's bottom, beaten by the new rage of the gale.

Sweep, swirl, bitter with salt and sand and cutting shells, it struck them in the face and crushed them under its fury, and the waters rose with the winds, and presently, with a roar like that of some mighty cannon, the great sea came booming over the ridge.

No longer crawling, curling and creeping its way like a thief in the night, but riding over the sands like a hero, and shouting for glory as it came. It dashed the boat up against the house.

Suddenly Susan, almost spent, her voice scarcely to be heard, whispered something to Gecky.

Gecky heard it and gave a spring out of the frail bark and in at the half door. She was on a level with it now.

"What you doin'?" cried Susan. "Gecky, what you doin'?" she shrieked, as the boat rocked and the waters rose and the storm howled in her ears.

"Goin' up to the square tower room." Gecky's voice sang back, like the pipe of a

sparrow threading its way through the uproar.

"You're lost, you air!" yelled Susan. "I can't hold the boat here, the sea's risin' every minute. You can't do no good, you'll only be a-throwin' away your life and a-savin' no one else's!"

"You said I had murder in my heart," came back the answer of the younger, like the voice of one a thousand miles away. "I'm a-goin' to try and show the Lord it ain't so."

It seemed to Susan Piper, standing in the darkness in the swaying boat, clutching, feeble fingered, at any jut of the house, while Gecky's words gnawed at her soul, — it seemed to her an eternity until once more she heard her sister's voice—but it was only sixty seconds.

With a wail it came to her, down through the desolate, fast filling homestead, as Gecky made her way.

"The tower room is busted open, Susan. There ain't nothin' there. I felt all 'round and 'round. Where are you? Are you there? Answer me, Susan!" she cried from the stair-

case window, peering out into the mu
"Susan, answer me!"

.

Every soul that could walk in Piper's Ri
was out, and when they saw the sea risi
when they saw it dash over the Ridge, mig
was the humanity that swelled in every he
of man, woman and child there.

As soon as they understood what was h
pening, a rush was made to haul the boats
land and drag them over to the new inlet.

But the blast only rose higher and high
and, the boats once brought around, no m
man's efforts could launch one of them e
on the waters of the inlet.

They simply had to stand there and wa
the horror of it, for watch they could, as
clouds made haste across the sky with
wind, and the moon sailed up in her ca
unpitying beauty.

They saw one woman jump from the l
window and strike the edge of a little bo
They saw her catch and grasp and clam
in and pick up the oars from the bottom a
pull for a dark object that was floating off
the barn, either tied or clinging to an uproo

pine tree. They thought they made out a third person, lying in the boat motionless.

The frail craft plunged and swayed as the woman's weak arms sawed at the oars, making always for that dark object yonder, as it sidled and curled away from her, seemingly further and further and never to be gained.

At last Deacon Bolt sprang into his boat and picked up a pair of oars, heedless of the restraining arms of his wife or of her tears.

"I can't stand that thar no longer!" he cried, jerking his head in the direction of the Piper house.

"If any of you is willing to foller me, come on. I ain't the one to stand a-lookin' on while women folks is fightin' for their lives. Come on, boys!"

Half a dozen lusty young fellows sprang into the boat, and with a shout from them and from the landsfolk off tossed the boat into the boiling billows.

First it appeared as if they would be able to ride the waves and make the new inlet, but shortly this illusion was dispelled. The deacon's big boat simply whirled round and round like a wheel on a pivot, and even the

strength of Titans could not have availed against the immeasurable forces of the sea and its ally, the blast.

In a few seconds they were stranded on the newly formed bar; on this side of them the mighty deep, on that, the now fast-falling rush of the new inlet, too shallow wherein to launch, too impossible to attempt to swim over to the Pipers'.

Then there came the first smooth of the lull, and looking yonder, where the moonlight lay with its split pearl over the wreckage, they beheld the woman in the boat reaching out long arms to the dark object floating with the tree. They saw her stretch, almost reach it, lose it, strain every nerve, but to have it flutter away; and then, with a favoring lurch her grasp was on it, and with a strength that must have been heaven sent she lifted and dragged it into her boat, and it fell seemingly on top of the third person; for a second woman's head now rose wildly from the hiding edge of the boat, and a pair of arms were tossed up only to fall back again at the quick touch of the one who had rowed.

"There's three of 'em," said Bolt. "Who's the third?"

"The hired boy, most likely. I tell you if he ain't beat to death by his 'sperience he owes his life to her!" exclaimed Forman.

The winds sank, the stars peeped out, emboldened by the moon; the waters fell, sullenly, reluctantly, sucking with them back into the sea as much of the Ridge as they could.

By the time the cocks were crowing to the coming dawn and the cows lowing to their milking in the hill pastures, the depth of water in the Pipers' dooryard was not above four feet, lowering each moment and leaving only infrequent pools, glistening for gladness when the sun at last walked over the hillock and found them.

When the village people got around Susan and Gecky stood ankle deep in the waters in the porch — forlorn, bruised, thankful, but unsociable, quiet, needing no one, proud as of old, with neither welcome nor hand-clasp for the anxious, helpful neighbors who would console and assist them.

The tower-room windows were closed tightly, for the glass had not been broken there, but gay-colored comfortables hung at

the casements, instead of the blinds and the vines that the blast had torn away.

"Susan, she's pretty well tuckered out," Miss Gecky vouchsafed, as she stood, gauntly uninviting, with arms akimbo, as if guarding the kitchen door from intrusion.

"Should think you'd be the tuckered out one," returned Deacon Bolt.

"We see'd you a-savin' that hired boy of yours."

"Did you?" Gecky replied impassively.

"Where is he now?" pursued Jen Forman's father.

"To hum, I guess," Miss Susan observed carelessly.

"His folks live to Spruce Harbor; we 'lowed they'd be worried, and we sent him off."

And the neighbors and friends, somewhat baffled in their minds, went back to their homes.

July was ended, so was August, and everything at Piper's Ridge looked much as it had in June, except that the Ridge itself was lower and broader, beaten flatter by the rising of the sea; but the new inlet was as calm as the old one, and the sandpipers hopped on the ripply

stretch of beach as safely as before, perhaps more so, for ever since that fearful night the village urchins were more than ever chary of lingering anywhere near the house where Miss Susan and Miss Gecky lived.

The hired boy had never come back from Spruce Harbor, and Deacon Bolt's second cousin's wife's father had said that the hired boy had returned to his folks the night before the sea rose.

Children belated at their fishing told stranger tales than ever of the weird noises heard "up to Miss Piper's."

Young people, love faring, lost in happiness, way beyond the dunes, returning hand in hand after nightfall, whispered low that they had seen Miss Susan and Miss Gecky hovering down the hollow under the hillside, with someone, something, indescribable but moving, between them.

Fewer and further apart were the visits of the sisters to either meeting-house, store or post-office. But more frequent and more prolonged was the gossip of the women of Piper's Ridge over the unnamable mystery that seemed to brood "up yonder."

The fields now were rich with the yellow and brown of the stubble, gay fringed along the stone walls with the crimson of the sumachs, and warm with the tassels of the goldenrod; and purple asters nodded in the autumn breeze.

The orchards had been newly stripped and most of the people had had their "parin's," and all the roofs around were spread with the wooden trays full of the sliced fruit.

Miss Susan and Miss Gecky had gathered in their store on this day. Mrs. Bolt had seen them on the ladders filling their baskets when she and the ill-mannered child drove home from Spruce Harbor.

A thought crossed Mrs. Bolt's mind as the horse lagged up the sandy hill, and, being a kind-hearted and a shrewd woman withal, quite willing that her nimble wit should masquerade oftentimes under the cloak of her good nature, she did not delay an hour in putting her idea into practice.

"Let's go up, a hull lot of us, to-night, to the Pipers', and give 'em a real neighborly help at their apple parin'!" she exclaimed to Mrs. Forman and the half dozen others whom she met at the post-office.

"And take some victuals along, and have the men folks come, too, and make it pleasant all 'round; kind of a surprise party like," looking amply about her for the seconding of her motion.

It came slowly. Some hung back because others did not come forward, and all were unenthusiastic because of the mystery that seemed to hang with a deeper gloom over the Ridge folk as soon as the sun had gone down.

But the good woman, dauntless here as in every other enterprise ever undertaken by her, soon had won over most of the women to her side, and twilight found quite a procession of wagons climbing the Ridge road.

There was a tacit understanding in the mind of every person of the party that that night would, in some as yet unguessed fashion, and through the agency of the deacon's notable wife, do something toward laying the ghost of mystery which hung about the house they neared.

An air of suppressed and silent excitement pervaded them all as the string of vehicles wound slowly down the sandy lane by the new inlet to the Pipers' gate.

Susan sat near the wide-open door. The air was chilly, but the fire in the stove burned hot. She was busy paring apples, and baskets and pans full of the comely fruit stood everywhere about the kitchen, while the long wooden trays lay in a pile on the table, ready for the quarters that were to be dried in tomorrow's sun.

Gecky started from the opposite door to go up the stairs. She had a small tray in her hands, with chicken and bread and cream and peaches on it. The crunch of the many wheels in the sand made her stand still on the third step; it made Susan look up hurriedly over her spectacles to see the procession stop.

She sprang up and with a jerk pushed the half door shut with her foot and peered out over it at her visitors.

Mrs. Bolt was foremost, with the rest of the women at her heels, while the men haltered and tied their horses.

As she reached the door she caught sight, as did her companions, of Miss Gecky going up the stairs with the tray of food, and instinctively they all exchanged glances, while the leader spoke.

"We're all friends, Miss Susan, every one of us; you needn't think to close the half door onto us!" opening it as she spoke and placidly dislodging Miss Susan from her position.

"We're come to give you a help at your apple parin'! I saw you and Gecky gatherin' in your fruit this afternoon, and says I to the rest of 'em," indicating the breathless women who flanked her, "'let's be neighborly and go up and do it up handsome by the Pipers this very night'; so here we be." She untied her bonnet strings and threw off her shawl.

"You're most kind, I'm sure," murmured Susan stiffly, while Gecky, trembling, backed down with her tray, covered it with a napkin, and set it on the hall stand. "But we ain't got much of a show of apples this fall anyhow, and me and Gecky is ekel to parin' what we've got, thank you, all the same," surveying the group, augmented now by the awkward border of back-hanging men.

"Oh, shucks!" exclaimed the deacon's wife, heartily. "Come on now, all hands, and let's begin," catching up a knife and setting a lusty example. "We ain't come empty-handed, neither, hev we?" nodding to the others.

"There's some pretty good cakes and pies and cheese and such like in them baskets. Gecky, don't look as if you'd seen a spirit, but come and set right down, and let's all, young and old, have a real good time!"

Usually such a flow of animal spirits as that brought to bear by Mrs. Bolt galvanizes even the most hopeless circumstances into a show of warmth, but on this occasion not even the shadow of a thaw came over the sisters, while the company, although bravely led on by the deacon's spouse, was a taciturn and curious group.

Occasionally a girl giggled at the whispers of the young man nearest her; more seldom an older woman gave succinct account of her latest illness; now and then one of the husbands vouchsafed a remark about the crops or the fish or the weather.

Mrs. Bolt alone, to the little soft whirr of the knives through the apples, kept up a constant stream of chat, principally consisting of questions, answered with an ill grace by the Pipers.

At last she said, clearing her throat and looking over at Mrs. Forman, while uncon-

sciously each woman there held her knife in midair, motionless, for a moment: "How about Peter, Susan; I ain't heard you say anything about him this good while back?"

A long breath of relief seemed to go up from each woman, while the men, even the silly ones, turned solemn eyes on the prim, withered, little woman of the house, as she replied:

"Our brother Peter's as well as common, thank you, Mis' Bolt."

"No talk of his comin' East to see you yet?" pursued the deacon's wife amiably.

"No, there isn't," Susan said.

"Our brother Peter's too well fixed to care about takin' any long journeys, I guess," Miss Gecky put in, tossing her misshapen head, and then bending it lower over the apple she was peeling.

"I s'pose so," continued Mrs. Bolt. "Well, now, how big is his house anyhow, and is it true, as you've said, that him and his folks never eat in the kitchen?"

"Peter wouldn't think of eatin' in the room where his victuals was cooked," remarked Susan icily.

"Did he marry a rich girl?" inquired Mrs.

Forman in a determined way, as if not to be entirely outdone in the catechetical line by her friend and neighbor, and then flushing furiously at her own temerity.

"No, he didn't," Gecky answered, while the silly young man caught the giggling girl's paring and threw it over his right shoulder, narrowly escaping the stove as he did so.

While the giggling girl stuffed her handkerchief in her mouth, and while the young men clustered together near the girls, all now throwing apple parings over their right shoulders, the elders paused, and the pause was broken by a sound above.

A dull thump, as of a heavy body thrown against the wall, or a door, perhaps.

Susan Piper sprang to her feet. Ever since the floodtime in June she had not been the self-contained woman she was before.

Everybody suspended movement and looked at each other as a rasping scrape was next heard.

Then Gecky laughed, her wry little visage twisting itself into curves of incredible pathos as she pulled her sister down in her chair.

"Lor'!" she exclaimed. "What's the mat-

ter with you, Susan? A-springin' up like a jump-jack because one o' them new shutters on the tower-room windows happens to flop and creak with the wind!"

Then everybody tried to say something, and the young folks got out the baskets and began to take out the good things.

"What's that burnin' smell?" ejaculated Mrs. Bolt, lifting her head from her work.

Susan's eyes shot a nervous glance at Gecky.

Gecky was fetching plates from the dresser, and she observed casually, as she set down a pile:

"Ain't you smelled anything before, Mis' Bolt? Them young folks' apple parin's that fell onto the stove's been smellin' real good to me for ever so long."

Miss Gecky's queer little withered neck jerked around in a birdlike fashion, and there was almost a jauntiness in her air as she smiled over at Deacon Bolt's wife.

Then the plates and cups and saucers rattled, and at sight of the good cheer, tongues were loosed and laughter rose above a whisper.

The lamp on the dresser burned brightly and the candles were not spared; the room

was warm and more cheerful than it had been in years; the kettle sang, and in the merriment of the moment everybody had forgotten the undertone of suspicion that had tinged their coming to this house.

When the sweet cakes were being cut and tasted something crawled in at the open door that led to the hall; something that came creeping down the staircase, blown by the wind, seemingly, from somewhere overhead.

Susan Piper sprang up and shrieked out, "Look at the smoke!"

In another instant the flames burst in at the doorway, and every soul there was choking, blinded.

They made a dash for the porch door, the men pushing the women before them into the open air, Susan and Gecky Piper, hand in hand, reeling out with the rest. None too soon.

They looked up to see the whole roof of the house springing into little spots of fire, to see the tower-room one glow of crimson tongues forking up into the dark blueness of the sky.

Susan and Gecky stood for an instant, the glare reddening their tortured faces. Then

the younger wrung her hand free of her sister's and with a cry of "Some of you folks help me carry over this ladder, will you?" Miss Gecky's frail little scrawny hands caught up one end of the ladder that stood against one of the apple trees in the yard.

They helped her to carry it over and lean it against the house before they realized what they had been asked to do. It reached nearly up to the tower-room's flaming windows.

Then Deacon Bolt cried out, "What fur? There ain't nothin' or nobody any livin' soul could save up there nohow! What's the ladder fur?" he asked harshly, turning to Gecky.

Her eyes were uplifted. Susan rushed across to her sister.

"You shan't go, Gecky Piper!" she whispered.

"I'm a-goin'," Gecky said, planting her feet on the ladder.

"What fur?" yelled the men, laying hands on her; but she shook them off with a smile.

There was something that held them spellbound; no man or woman could ever tell why he, or she, did not, then and there, seize Angelica Piper and hold her down.

But they did not; instead, they watched her, step by step, as she rose amid the smoke and crackle, their eyes climbing, climbing with her, until they beheld above her a living creature standing, grinning, in the blackened window of the tower-room, a sea of scarlet all about him, but seemingly fearless of it all.

"Merciful Lord!" shrieked Mrs. Bolt. "It's their brother Peter!"

Then Susan Piper fell with her face to the ground.

Gecky had reached him just as the ladder shivered in a shower of splinters and sparks beneath her. She caught at the window-sill, staggering, while the men hunted for the other ladder.

She raised herself and at last stood beside It. She put her arms around It, just as the men set up the second ladder, and one of them tried to gasp his way up to her through the smoke and cinders and sparks.

They beheld her dimly, clinging to It, they heard her begging It to come down. They saw It push over the ladder and with Its superhuman strength, shrieking in mirth, they saw It hold her close in that awful grip — the grip of a human being gone mad.

The flames shot out, widening below them into a sheet of livid fire; the flames shot up above them, reaching, it seemed, to the cold blue home of the stars, as the men and women, tearing off their garments and spreading them, shrieked, with mighty voice: "Jump!"

Fiercer leaped the flames, colder blew the sweet wind from the sea, scattering the smoke for a second.

It held Gecky to Its breast, gibbering and shaking Its head; then It let go of her with a laugh of derision at her pleadings.

"Jump!" yelled the people below.

And the breeze lulled, and the smoke thickened, but through it they heard faintly words like these:

"No, no, no! O Lord, you know now there wasn't murder in my heart."

All praying to God, they saw the blackness fold around the brother and sister impenetrably, and the old house crash in like a pall over its mystery and its martyrdom.

The Man Who was Centuries Old

✝

His most Catholic majesty Louis XIII reigned in France. On the king's highway, stretching between Amiens and the small village of Lac-en-Bois, the dust was still thick on the chestnut trees, from the hoofs of the king's horses, as the court had made merry progress from one hunting lodge to another. Night was already throwing her shadows ahead of her, the lowing of distant cattle, the far-off pipe of the shepherd, the tang of the convent bell, and presently the pawing and prancing of post horses, the cries and snaps of postillions, the jolt of wheels, the gay voice of youth and the slightly crabbed accents of age, the blooming face of Marie at one window of the post-chaise, the withered countenance of her grandmamma, the marquise, at the other.

"Hurry, then, my good Jacques," cried Marie, with a smile, "since grandmamma is weary already, and would be at home, that she may rest herself before the abbé comes for supper and chess."

"Hurry, you devils, you slaves!" cried the marquise, with a scowl. "Or if we do not reach the chateau before the moon rises I'll pack every one of you out of doors to-morrow."

Before the moon rose, it is almost unnecessary to state, they were at the chateau, leaving far behind them in the cloud of their dust and sand another post-chaise. This one crept along the highway as if afraid that its passengers might break in pieces, which perhaps was not far away from being the fact.

"Let us hurry a bit," said one lackey to another, "by the sacred soul of my dead mother, I am hungry and thirsty, and the inn must be reached soon or I die."

"Hold your tongue," responded the other. "The count is like to die at any moment. I know by the peep I took at him — ha! I have not been the valet of Duhamel, court physician, for nothing. I know a dying man when

I see him. We will go slowly still, lest his last hour be agitated. Eh?"

"Dying," repeated the first lackey, making the sign of the cross, at which exact second a deep groan proceeded from the curtained interior of the post-chaise, causing both men to start and rein in their horses involuntarily.

"What do you mean?" cried the first lackey. "We should rather press forward and call the surgeon and the priest."

"That! For your priest!" replied No. 2, snapping his fat fingers. "You are a lump. Hold! Do you not see? The count dies — the jewel case, the money bags, the portmanteaux, whose are they? Ha, fool of fools, you wake up! Shall we use whip and spur now, eh?"

"No," grunted the first lackey, checking his speed to a dog trot, and at the same instant casting a half-terrified look over his shoulder at the drawn leather window curtains of the post-chaise. A murmur only reached the ears of these honest and faithful servants as they carefully guided the coach over all the deepest ruts and assiduously restrained even the well-spent ardor of their tired beasts. It

was a murmur that seemed to mingle with the twilight breeze, stirring the dusty chestnut blossoms, and blowing now, just a little, the stamped leather curtains apart. It came from between the blue lips of a man who looked as if the seal of death were indeed upon him.

One would say that centuries had graven the furrows on that waxen visage; the gums were shrunken, toothless; the eyes sunk in their weary sockets; the aquiline line of the nose sharpened into a beak; the hair and eyebrows gone; the cheeks shrivelled, and the brow lined with a network of horrible wrinkles. Rich garments hung in satin folds about this bundle of bones; a velvet hat and plumes fell over the withered ears; a jewelled sword hung, mocking the palsied arm that could not wield it, whatever the stress, and the emaciated legs dangled loose in their elegant stockings, the pointed toes of the court shoes bagging over the fleshless feet. The hands of this creature were clasped together with the convulsive grip of hungry talons, seeming, in their tenseness, like to draw the blood of each other, were there any to draw.

There appeared to be life left only in the

voice. The murmur which came to the postillions, as they carefully loitered along in the now growing gloom, was but the attenuated shadow of sound; yet, weird as the lonely hour and place, the utterance was distinct, and in the cracked and feeble tone there was strange hint of almost forgotten music — the ghost of a lusty youth came back to pipe its dirge. It said:

"Oh, douce jouvence, j'entends ta voix;
Oh, douce jouvence, reviens à moi.
Je sens le parfum de ta bouche;
Mon âme s'enivre à ta belle touche."

Then the post-chaise gave a jolt that set the jewelled sword rattling against the panel, and the curtains flapping and the strange voice quavering with emotion that could but be a vain memory of some splendid past. And the second postillion leaped to the ground and peered, in the foreglow of the moon, into the coach and wagged his honest head at the ignoring eyes of his master, and tripped back, vaulting into his saddle to whisper:

"Courage! God send us another rut as deep as that last one, and we will live like lords the rest of our lives." And the first lackey

swered by repeating an *ave* as quickly as he ssibly could, for good luck.

While the count fumbled on with his song, ning back, his bare poll in its ghastly trick- of gew-gaws, in the corner of his carriage, eyelids drooped, his hands fell asunder, his s slipped farther across the foxskin, he ank and cowered in his garments, but with- in his utterance, there was a hint of some- ng of life — like the infinitesimal germ har- ring in the rotten seed:

"Mon âme s'enivre à ta belle touche,
Délices, délires;
Pleurer et rire;
Oh, douce jouvence reviens à moi;
Oh, douce jouvence."

And the moon rose full on the king's high- y and the skeleton rose in the post-chaise, d a shiver as the shiver of the agony of death ssed biting through every bone of it, every ed of its tattered skin, every beat of its ar- ies; through the eyes, the nose, the ears, the s, and arms, and hands, and feet, and trunk; d between the lips there thrilled again, ough the scented dew of the night, the wild, pealing refrain:

"Oh, douce jouvence, j'entends ta voix."

And at this instant the rut "deep as the last one" was opportunely sent by that deity to whom the excellent postillions owed their allegiance. It nearly threw them over their horses' heads into the dirty ditch water, and it must have been the crash of it that caused a curiously deep inspiratory groan to emanate from the owner of the coach.

"Ha!" cried number two, hand to ear, elbow jerked toward the swinging undrawn curtains. "The count has surely breathed his last. Hark!"

"The saints are good to us," exclaimed the other, "and indeed, as his excellency told me but yesterday, to-day completes his one hundredth year, surely 'tis long enough for one man to live. Hist, you go that side, I this."

So, tip-toeing, this precious pair sided the post-chaise and laid their itching fingers on the curtains, pulling them quite apart. The figure that met their eager gaze was that of a tall and elegant man of thirty years; every fold of the rich garments was well filled by a supple roundness of flesh and blood; a fine tapering hand lay on the jewelled sword-hilt; soft black

wavy hair fell from beneath the plumed hat; eyes full of the languorous ardor and intensity of the Hebrew race gave them back look for look, the red, sad lips parted over rows of perfect teeth and the whole poise of the creature was that of an Oriental enjoying to the full, if in something of superciliousness, the advantages of an Occidental surrounding. A superlative youth was the most striking characteristic, and it was that, above all, which held the two servants spellbound for the space of about a minute. Then, with howls and shrieks, imprecations and adjurations, shiverings and quakings, they turned and ran. The young man smiled in amusement as he murmured under his breath, "For the sixteen-hundredth time the sight of my accursed youth strikes terror. Well, so be it."

He opened the chaise-door, got out, mounted one of the horses and guided his carriage himself; there was no other course to pursue. As he rode slowly along, he sang again the verse that had sounded but as a murmur from the interior of the post-chaise; sang it in the rich mellow voice of a trained musician, the sombre timbre of its melancholy sweetness echoing on

the lonely highways; sang until he met other travelers than himself; the first of these was a curé; he stooped at the roadside, peering at something, and, replying to the count's inquiry, he said:

"Ah, monsieur, it is some poor unfortunate, for whom I can do nothing; I believe since the plague is abroad he may be one of its victims, crawled home from the wars." And the good curé went on his way. And the second traveler he met stooped over the fallen one also, and, doffing his hat to the count, he said:

"Alas, monsieur, here is a sick man, a stranger, but in this world one has enough to do to take care of one's self and one's own," and he went on his way also.

Then the count leaped from his saddle and picked up the sick man and put him in the post-chaise, and, remounting, in another league's length gained the inn. He bade the host put the stranger to bed and furnish him with all he needed. For himself he ordered refreshment, pulled a letter from his bag and desired that it be sent the next morning to the Marquise de Boinvilliers.

The following day, which was radiant in the

green glory of June, the aged marquise sat upon the terrace sipping her chocolate; the Abbé Gustiniani, her spiritual adviser and chaplain, lost in his Book of Hours, was not far away; while the lovely Marie bent her eyes in modesty upon her embroidery frame; it is true that with the silken stitches were mingled some very salt tears.

"I repeat," exclaimed the marquise, her bony hand trembling atop of her gold-headed stick, "it is time, mademoiselle, that you are a wife. *Mon dieu!* at your age, eighteen, I was already the mother of your papa. The prince is all that a young lady should wish for."

"But, indeed, grandmamma," said Marie under her breath, "I have no affection, no love at all for the prince; he is perfectly old, ugly, stupid," added the young girl, with a suspicion of her grandparent's decision in her low voice.

"Ugly, old, stupid," echoed the aged lady; "you should have seen your esteemed grandpapa. And is it affection and love of which you desire to taste? Bah, Marie, my child, there are no such things." The Abbé Gustiniani raised his intelligent eyes from his Book

of Hours, and his patroness hastened to add, with an inclination of her bewigged head:

"Those are sentiments which belong to religion, and have nothing to do with marriage. The prince is an excellent *parti*, with a superb position, in favor at court, and his family jewels are second only to those of the queen."

Marie rose, threw down her embroidery frame, and crossed over to the abbé.

"Let me go into a convent," she said quietly. "Were the prince the king himself I would not marry him."

The abbé passed his hand soothingly over that of his young pupil, but the marquise, paling through all her rouge, rapped vigorously on the pavement with her stick and said:

"Listen, then, and take warning. Younger than you, mademoiselle, I also thought to marry for love; with more justice, too, for I had a suitor." The small eyes of the marquise shut tightly and her two remaining teeth bit sharply into her well-reddened old lips, — doubtless her souvenirs were bitter-sweet. "Yes," she continued in a monotonous tone, "I had a young, handsome, gallant suitor; at least his eyes, his hand, his actions begged me

believe that I was the object of his intense devotion. His presence, his attentions were such that each hour of the days he spent at my side urged me to expect that he would plead for our early betrothal. One day I led him into the church, wishing that together we might kneel before the altar; my mamma, peace be to her soul, was near us. As we approached this sacred place Joseph was seized with I know not what of excitement, anguish, terror, as his eyes were riveted upon the cross. He did not once look at me; he spent no courtesy upon either the *bon Dieu* or my respected mamma, but darted from the church and was never seen again. Love; no, no," concluded the marquise, in a harsh and strident tone, as she rose and crossed the terrace. "It is marriage, that is the matter to be considered for a young girl like you."

At this moment a servant appeared, bearing a letter, which he presented to his mistress, and withdrew.

"From my grandson; from Philippe. Come, come, Marie, read to me this epistle from your brother in Algiers and dry your tears."

Marie read: "Dearest grandmamma and

most revered godmother and guide: I have the great honor to present to your consideration with this, Count Joseph le Charpentier, the most learned man I have ever encountered." (Again the marquise bit in her poor old lips. It was at the word Joseph.) "It seems to me that he must have beheld everything in his long life, since his conversation leaves no subject, however remote, unexpounded. My love to Marie. My respectful sentiments to Monsieur l'Abbé. I kiss your hands, madame, and am your devoted and humble grandson, Philippe."

The footman now returned to announce that Monsieur le Count awaited the pleasure of Madame la Marquise in the salon. The old woman plucked an inch of mirror from her chatelaine and shook her head as she withdrew into the chateau by way of the open window of the library.

"I am too much dishevelled at this moment to receive the count. Mlle. Marie will do so for me; and this is quite correct, since Philippe's letter says our guest is a man of respectable age. Good Father Gustiniani," she adds, turning to the abbé, "pray do not remove your-

self too far from the vicinity — even the aged are prone to lightness. Marie, I will return when I am a little refreshed. Alphonse," to the footman, "request monsieur to have the goodness to come out on the terrace."

With which she retired to that inimitable mystery which she called "la toilette."

And Marie, pale from recent emotion, stepped forward to greet her brother's friend. Even now, plumed hat in hand, and gemmed sword sparkling at his thigh, the Count Joseph bowed low before her; their eyes met, mingled in that exquisite and singular encounter which is as old as the Garden of Eden and as new as the recurring springtide. The abbé had already wandered, with his back this way, down the arch of the poplars, head bent above his devotions. It was the first time in her life that this young girl had even ever seen, at a close range, a young and noble-appearing man; the first time, most assuredly, that she had ever been practically alone with any man, save the saintly abbé.

To Count Joseph this experience, with a soul just meeting the awakening touch of that other soul for which it waits, was, it is true,

not new—and yet, as true was it that Marie seemed to possess for him an attraction from which he in vain strove to release himself. Of what did these two speak? Rather it shall be asked—during those moments of the faultless June time, while Madame la Marquise, assisted by her maid, constructed "sa belle toilette de figure," while Monsieur l'Abbé, lost in godly contemplation, having forgotten Marie's very existence, as he sat by the fountain forty yards away—of what did they not speak?

Beginning with Philippe and grandmamma, flowers, birds, devotions, friendship—not love—but sympathy of tastes, loneliness, all those things that make the sweet infatuating borderland of romance, for before one actually sets foot in Paradise, one must indeed walk near its closed gates. The forest, the brooks, the bells—hark! they are ringing now; and Marie devoutly crosses herself, while Count Joseph, trembling with a strong emotion, paces up and down before her. Then of music, listen! There is the beautiful organ in the little chapel. Will monsieur come, and Marie will play for him? And paintings, in the grand gallery there are the portraits of all her ancestors, as well as

many other splendid subjects; she will be glad to show all these to Count Joseph. And Count Joseph? Well, in his singular, luminous, narrow, Semitic eyes there is a pathos and a submission that savor of one who feels himself the inevitable instrument of sorrow to others, as he fulfils the strange sacrifice of his own unalterable destiny.

Ah, yes, but he would indeed be happy if mademoiselle would show him all these treasures. And the marquise stirred up the rouge in its enamelled pot, while her woman heated the iron to curl her wig and the excellent abbé now slept peacefully under the poplars while his Book of Hours furnished pleasant entertainment to a sprawling caterpillar. But presently the toilette of the marquise was indeed finished, and, magnificent in a brocaded negligée, with a cloak of rich black lace setting off the brilliancy of her artistic complexion and the really snapping brightness of her little eyes, the grande dame descended the staircase of the chateau, and, conscious of the impression she felt herself sure to produce upon the sage she expected to greet, she swept out upon the terrace, ready-smiling, hands catching at

her gown for the curtsey she would give to her grandson's friend.

Finding the terrace deserted, and the excellent abbé's snores distinctly audible, it was but the work of a moment to patter down the path and shake the abbé awake, with a few pious oaths, as she made inquiry for her granddaughter and the count. It was longer before the abbé, roused from a delightful dream (wherein the memoirs he was writing had been praised at Rome) could be made to say that he had not even yet seen the count. The marquise struck the ground with her stick in fury.

"Man is still but man, my good father," she cried, "and even were the count a hundred years old it ill befits you to fall a-snoring and leave Marie to converse with him on God alone knows what ridiculous science! Where are they, monsieur? Tell me that."

At this juncture the noble lady stopped short. Music, the like of which neither she nor the Abbé Gustiniani had ever heard, smote their ears, stilled their tongues and sent their hearts a-clapping. It was from the organ in the chapel loft, and they knew it was not Marie who played. Spellbound even these

two stood, the one a worldly sinner of fourscore steeped in mundane lore and precept; the other saintwise, heavenly still and mild. Still the music sounded on.

The count and Marie had climbed the outside winding stair to the organ loft, laughing with delight at such an adventure, you may be sure, he helping her over the broken steps, and then he played for her—the echoes of all the yearnings of all the years he had seen born and die, chanting strange, solemn, sweet beseechings in her ears. The girl was near swooning with the matchless joy of it, when, raising his eyes to look at her, the player suddenly ceased, saying:

"Now mademoiselle will show me, I am sure, the pictures?" Assuredly mademoiselle would. And down the ruinous wind of the outer stair they wended, his hand over hers in mute protection; across the court, through the cloisters, down the little dark passage, out into the sumptuous grandeur of the great *galerie* of the Chateau Boinvilliers; at the same time that the marquise and the abbé were hobbling and peering up and down the chapel, and there too, turning their agitated steps in the direction of

the *galerie*. The young girl, with the enthusiasm of her race, pointed out the long line of the Marquises de Boinvilliers and their ladies, and children, and horses and hounds and hawks; and the count praised and lauded with his lips, while his beautiful enigmatical eyes said two things; one was to Marie: "You are more beautiful, more lovable, than all these lovely ladies put together." The other was to himself: "And is life, after all, nothing but repetition, repetition, repetition?" And then Marie, coming to the end, at last, of all her ancestors, stood before a great green baize curtain at the far end of the grand *galerie*, and Count Joseph stood close beside her, as she laid her hand on the hanging ropes of the curtain, preparatory to drawing it, and said:

"Now, monsieur, I will show you the greatest thing of all, the most wonderful possession of my house, a sacred picture that you will venerate, love, worship."

As the young girl spoke the arm of the count drew her within its gentle clasp, drew her head down upon his shoulder, and in one moment more his soft Oriental lips would have been laid upon hers, except for the fact that the

ıken door at the other end of the gallery eaked on its iron hinges, admitting Mme. La Iarquise and M. l'Abbé.

"Behold!" cried madame.

"Behold!" cried the abbé.

Marie, frightened, started erect, and with a uick impulse pulled the cord and drew the ırtain back from the sacred picture. It was ıe Crucifixion.

With an uncontrollable shudder the count's ɣes rolled wildly, his teeth chattered, his face ecame livid with an agony of remorse that rew the sweat in bubbles; he fell on his knees, ɔwering, while Marie in an ecstasy fell upon ers, while the marquise and the abbé pattered ɑ their high heels and sandals down the ngth of the great high gallery.

"Ah," cried the noble lady under her breath, how admirable is the influence of religion, ɜpecially in the aged and the wise!"

"And oh," responded the holy father, "how eautiful is piety in the venerable, and also in ıe young!"

They were both past fourscore and did not ɜe well. They reached the count and Marie ı a second more. The girl rose smiling; she

had not dared look at her companion since she last spoke. The man got up with difficulty, tottering; his gaze averted from the stretching canvas. He turned a little to meet the newcomers; he encountered the brilliant little eyes of the marquise. And a shriek rent the air; the stick of the marquise was raised and fell to the stone floor, with a rap that split it in fragments, and the abbé and the young girl both rushed to support her.

"Away with you both!" she cried aloud, "I have no need of help. Look!" and her long, bony forefinger, sparkling with rubies and diamonds, was stretched, pointing in the face of the count.

"This is my Joseph — my lover, my suitor; the one, Marie, I told you of," clutching her granddaughter's arm like a vise. "The one who, before this very sacred picture, left me and was never seen again."

"But, beloved lady, consider," spoke the abbé, "this gentleman is young, and now fourscore years have passed over your white head. Consider."

"To the devil with your 'consider'!" she cried harshly. "It is he. Those eyes, those

lips, that mien, the very shudder is the same as when we knelt together before the altar in the Church of Saint Genevieve. By the Virgin in heaven!" shaking Marie with superhuman strength, "was I not wise to counsel you against the damnable deceit you call love?"

Marie wrenched herself free of her grandmamma, and with a glance and a movement that were heart-breaking she turned to the count, while the abbé told his beads, and the bees hummed at the windows. There was no response, save one look of ineffable compassion, as the count turned and fled.

"Ha-a-a!" shrieked the marquise, "Look, he goes, he goes, as he went sixty years ago!"

And then tears came, washing away all the beautiful rouge and powder, and bedraggling the glossy curls and the rich laces and the brocade, as Marie led her grandmamma, mumbling still, up to her chamber. The abbé sat up all that night, writing in his memoirs; Marie also sat up all night with Memory.

The next week she was betrothed to the prince, and married him, and wore his splendid jewels, and bore him a little son, and she called his name "Joseph."

The Story of a Stable Door

✝

San Zeffiro is the tiniest of towns. It lies, away from the world, in the southwestern boundary corner of the Campagna. Between it and the sea rises only the long, low range of the Monte Brenta hills, and between the few scattered *casale* ripples the little stream that gives its name to the village.

I went there in the early Spring—the time when tourists are fleeing from Rome as from a pestilence, and where many assured me that even at San Zeffiro I should find fever, and perchance worse, lurking in the vernal flowers and exquisite freshness that awaited me there. No matter. I was willing to risk it for the bliss of spending two whole months where the face of a Saxon was not likely to greet me; where the world and the world's ways were

unknown. I periled even the spectre that is said to walk abroad waiting whom it may devour.

To San Zeffiro I went.

Albergo there was none. Happily the hotel would at once argue the expected influx of *forestieri*. Osteria there was; a doubtful place where no one of any account ever stopped, and which, therefore, I hailed with enthusiasm. For once in my life I had determined to divorce myself from civilization, so called, and to see what manner of lives these people led to themselves.

The inn had been, in days long gone by, a convent, and my windows, looking eastward, faced upon a square court, surrounded on two sides by the ruins of the cloisters, and on the other two by the stables and that part of the building now made over to the baser uses of the kitchen, living and sleeping rooms of the worthy hostess and her family.

These were not many. Berta was a woman of ample proportions, with a round, somewhat saddened face. Her eyes had been beautiful in her youth, and still the long lashes rested on a peach-like cheek; but, working early and

late, albeit singing the while, when one works without one's mate is wearisome—and Dame Berta's husband, Martino, lay sound asleep under the grave sods in the little churchyard down below, nearer the village proper.

Her daughter, Nuccia, a girl of nineteen, and her nephew, Tino, a strong, swarthy fellow of twenty-eight, formed the household.

Shortly after I came,—by the way, I was an exclamation point in their lives, from which they never recovered,—the village priest, Padre Giglio, whose parsonage was undergoing some much-needed repairs, took up his abode also at the Osteria San Zeffiro.

It was a curious life, to be sure—out of the whirl and fascinating flash and uproar of the Paris "season" into this forgotten corner of the world, where letters could not reach me save once a week, where a newspaper was an almost comical rarity, and where I was the sole foreigner in the place.

Nuccia always brought my bowl of milk, with some coarse bread and a dish of fruit, to my room early in the morning; a luncheon of eggs, perhaps a little meat, with soup and coffee and small sweet cakes, was likewise served

to me in solitude somewhere in the afternoon —one never thought of hours at San Zeffiro; there was no clock in the house, my own watch was broken, and the sun dial in the court was cracked in two. But in the evening Dame Berta outdid herself—two guests at the osteria, and one of them a veritable *forestiere*, were not to be disdained, and the best efforts of the stone oven and the brazier were laid at the double shrine of Padre Giglio and myself.

We sat—he, a white-haired but by no means an old man, with keen, flashing eyes, and the mobile mouth that told of a poetic nature, with, alas! nothing to struggle with, for, or against in this spot but stagnation—and I—a young woman from the other side of the world, bent on attaining that Mecca of my compatriots, "a new sensation"—we sat there on either side of the square table. Berta darted back and forth between us and the kitchen, Nuccia served us quietly, while we heard amid the jingle of our plates and glasses the sad, droning music of Tino's *zampogna*, as, resting in the court after his day's work, he played the melancholy, passionate, wild airs that the

Italian peasant seems to borrow from the echoes of the splendid pasts of his native land.

The two oil lamps twinkled on the stands; the clematis vines blew in their long green trails at the casement; the good father ate with relish his *ricotta*, and that marvelous dish, compounded nowhere as in Southern Italy, consisting of slices of wonderfully crisped egg-plant, layers of creamy cheese, and slices of tomato—how is it done? I know not by what mysterious process the three ingredients are resolved into a species of ambrosia, I cannot tell; but Berta, conscious of a triumph, always smiled and hung her handsome head whenever she placed it upon the table.

"You have not this in your country, Signorina?" Padre Giglio asks me.

"Indeed," no, I cry. "We have all the things, but—"

"Not Berta," his reverence smiles, and Berta curtsies.

"Not Berta," echo I, merrily, "nor," as I turn my head, and remember Nuccia standing by the casement back of my chair—"nor Nuccia."

Berta curtsies again, for Nuccia, her pretty

head turned toward the court, heeds nothing of our talk.

Padre Giglio shakes his head as his eyes follow mine, and in the pose of the girl's lithe, lovely figure, leaning a little where the clematis swings, there is the mournfullest echo of Tino's music—the echo and answer of one sad soul that understands another.

I glance at his reverence a little interrogatively.

"Nuccia, *mia figlia*, fetch me a glass of milk, if you please." Padre Giglio makes his request with all the accustomed air of a courtier, and as he turns to me with a slight, deprecating smile, I marvel at this poor parish priest, with his grand world's air, sitting down to dig his own grave in this uncongenial place.

"We must have a little diplomacy even at San Zeffiro, Signorina."

"Yes, indeed, and why not?" laugh I.

"Si, si. The Signorina does not yet know our little romance, I fancy."

"No, no, a romance?" I say, interestedly. "Can there be one here?"

"Find me the spot in Italy—find me the place where Italians dwell, and where romance is not!"

Padre Giglio's thin cheeks flame with the sudden blood. I see half-wakened under his heavy lids the memory of some love earlier than his priestly vows.

"Oh," cries he, "you do not know my country, Signorina; you do not know my compatriots; their hearts are of fire and their kisses are of blood. And nowhere on earth is youth so young; nowhere is love so tender as with us!"

I look at him.

The empty plate is before him, in his lean hand is the iron fork with which he has eaten —the pose of his head is that of a *gran'gentiluomo;* the uplifted chin, the eager eyes, the parted lips—five hundred years ago Padre Giglio would have been known all over his country as an *improvisatore;* five hundred years ago he would have preached the crusades —and fought them, too!

Instead, he is guiding the souls of a handful of peasant dolts the road to heaven, eating his bread in silence, and consuming his fiery heart in penances and fastings; while his spirit yearns with that inexpressible yearning born of intellectual superiority, out, over, into the

strife—of man with man, brain with brain, force with force. Well, yes, it is a pitiful sight; and, momentarily forgetting the romance of Nuccia, I frankly tell him so.

His eyelids droop; a strangely tender expression creeps into his face.

"I thank you, Signorina. Sympathy, even though unmerited and unsought, is sweet. Nuccia," he resumes in a commonplace tone.

"Ah, yes, to be sure, Nuccia."

"Nuccia and Tino love one another."

"I see."

"But—"

"Surely there are no 'buts' to a love affair in San Zeffiro!" cry I.

"Are there not?" His reverence's voice is harsh and cold as he rises from the table—forgetting to-day to wait for me to do so first, as is his invariable custom.

"Ah! well, Padre Giglio, pardon me. How do I know? But then—"

"They have nothing to live on, nothing to marry on."

"Love," I suggest unfeelingly.

His reverence shudders.

"Signorina, do not jest with it. Look at

them." He steps nearer to the casement. I follow him. Nuccia and Tino are standing near the stable door, merely looking into each other's eyes.

"You see?" shrugging his shoulders. "One lives that way a long time and then—"

"One dies," I say, looking off far across the green little hills to where the snow-topped mountains marry with the moonlit sky.

"Thank God, yes."

When I turn my head toward him I find that he has left me, and presently I see him in the court, pacing up and down, his fine lips tremulous with his evening prayers.

When Nuccia brings me my breakfast next morning I look at her. She is a lovely creature, with her creamy, rose-flushed skin, her velvety eyes and her long braided hair; her moist mouth, red as a June rose, and her round throat.

"Well, Nuccia," I say carelessly, I think, "and how is your mother this morning?"

"Well, Signorina; thank you. Always well; a little troubled about the buffalo—Brigida will not eat her food to-day."

"Oh! that is too bad," I reply sympathetically—"and, too, how is Tino?"

"Tino"—she repeats the name in a lingering fashion. "Oh! Signorina, Tino is as always too—"

"Ah, Nuccia?" I say it as women love to hear it when their lovers are in question. But instead of the blush and smile I expect, Nuccia sinks down upon the floor beside me, and burying her face in her hands, weeps as if her young heart would break.

"Oh, Signorina! Oh, Signorina! You know! You know!"

"Yes, Nuccia," I whisper. "I know—I know. There, there; tell me. Speak to me; tell me all about it, can't you?"

"Oh, Signorina! What is it? Nothing new. Tino loves me—oh, so much! And I—I love Tino. But we have nothing to marry with. We never shall have anything. Tino owns his two dogs and his *zampogna*—and I not even that."

"But your mother—the *osteria*?—the cattle—eh, Nuccia?"

"Oh, Signorina, all that is hired; all—the rental is heavy, and the *mercante*, a Roman gentleman, Signorina, he is going to pull the *osteria* down to the ground just as soon as—as the lease runs out!"

I see it all—the hopelessness and folly of the little romance that I have found lying under the hill shade at San Zeffiro. Some way, my heart aches for them, and I take the beautiful head into my arms and caress Nuccia, and whisper all manner of idle, comforting nonsense in her ears—and yet, all the while I see Padre Giglio's face before me, and I hear his fervent "Thank God" as I speak.

Thinking of him, I suggest, rather blindly, the consolations of her religion to poor Nuccia.

"Yes, Signorina, I know. But, after all—as Padre Giglio said to me when I met him after mass this morning—one lives a little while—all violence and hope and despair—and then—one dies, thank God!"

"But you must not talk of dying, Nuccia: you are too young. You must pray to—to the Blessed Virgin." I venture it vaguely, not knowing precisely how Padre Giglio has instructed his flock in such regards.

"I have, I have!" cries the girl passionately; "and she hears me—I know she does. Mother will not believe me. Tino laughs, Padre Giglio looks grave and says nothing; but you, Signorina—you, perhaps, far off in your own

country, you have a lover, too. You will believe me because—" Nuccia's shrill voice falls to a timid whisper as she raises her eyes to my face.

"Because I have *seen* her!"

"Seen! Seen who, Nuccia?" ask I, bewildered.

"The Blessed Virgin—Our Lady. Oh, Signorina, I have seen her, and she was so kind, so beautiful, so mild."

"Yes," I reply vaguely, gazing into the peasant girl's splendid soft eyes.

"Where did you see her, Nuccia; tell me?"

We are near my window, the jalousies are thrown wide open, and across the court the sun shines frankly on the stables—the heavy oaken door is closed.

"I saw her there! There, Signorina!" Nuccia exclaims, pointing to the low-arched entrance.

"And when, Nuccia?" I inquire kindly.

"Oh, Signorina! the first time it was at the Annunciation—almost a year ago now—and the last time only the other night; I was tired after walking, and I sat yonder by the dial on the step; I fell asleep, and then she came—the same as before, Signorina, the very same."

"And you have told Padre Giglio of it?"

"Oh, indeed, yes, Signorina. But he only shook his head and bade me be a good, obedient child. I told him how the stable door—you know how heavy it is, Signorina?"

I nod. I do know well enough, for often I have opened it and passed in to the beautiful old cloisters that certainly even the donkeys and the gray cattle and the shaggy buffalo cannot rob of their beauty of column, spandrel and arch.

"Well, the stable door swung open lightly, softly, Signorina, and in an open place Our Blessed Lady stood, oh, so meekly, dressed all in a splendid robe, embroidered in pure gold, with white lambs and scrolls, and *Ave Maria! Ave Maria!* written everywhere upon it; and before her on a desk, like the reading-desk Padre Giglio stands at at San Stefano, lay an open book, and in the flower garden in front of her were lovely blossoms and birds in a cage, Signorina, and little rabbits, and two doves cooing on a perch above her head — and —"

Nuccia's face, in the intense awe and glory of its expression, carries my spirit captive with its enthusiasm.

"And, Signorina, on the pavement of marble before her knelt the Archangel Gabriel, a wreath of roses on his head, his wings half folded and a branch of Mary lilies in his hand! Oh, Signorina! What splendor! What felicity! What beauty!" Nuccia for a moment covers her eyes closely with her fingers.

"And then, Signorina, high above, aloft in the sky, there shone the white face of a white-haired old man, with angels all about him, and proceeding from him long rays of light, and the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove."

"The Annunciation," I say softly, taking the girl's cold hands in mine. "A beautiful, beautiful dream, Nuccia mia!"

"A dream, Signorina?" she repeats after me. "Oh, no! oh, no! Real, real, I tell you, Signorina, and it bodes us good luck; Tino and me, I am sure of it! He laughs, Tino does; but, all the same, I know he thinks as I do, because ever since I told him he always comes to chat with me by the stable door, and we always bid each other good-night over there."

I smiled half sadly, half enviously of the exquisite faith that seems to belong more to the

morningtime of our Old World than to these later days of eveningtide.

"Don't you believe, eh, Signorina?"

"I believe, Nuccia."

When she has left me, I sit quite still by the casement, my eyes riveted on the stable door across the court.

Would that in the happy sunshine of to-day the low portal might swing open, disclosing to my waking eyes the quaint, holy mediæval vision that twice has greeted little Nuccia's dreaming sight.

Ah, no. Instead, as the light breeze lifts the feathery clematis, a lizard, green as the jewel whose color he bears, glides up the wall, high as the battlemented turret carven with its pelligrino's staff and cockleshell, and pausing but an instant, slips off into the sunshine on the other side; a capo nero trills his soft note, and there comes to me from the nearby fields the pleasant, sweet breath of violets and daisies—mayhap, too, the inodorous, subtle essence of the poppies that sow all the country round with their scarlet and make of the pasture lands a gemmed and flaming splendor. I see the gray cattle browsing and the little

donkeys flapping their long, furry ears, and the shaggy buffaloes drawing the heavy wain across yonder field, heeding but little the smartly sounding cracks of Tino's long whip; I see the belfry of San Stefano nestling under the round-topped hill of San Casimiro; I hear the sharp bark of one of Tino's white dogs as he chases a butterfly, the low plash of the fountain in the court, and, presently, the nearer sound of a footstep.

I glance down.

It is, of course, Padre Giglio.

I remember, just then, that I had wanted to see him, and so—one lapses into languid habits in a spot like San Zeffiro—I tap with my fan against the window-ledge, and he looks up from his breviary:

"*Buon giorno*, Signorina."

"Good morning," I cry, more pleased than I can reasonably express at sight of his earnest, intellectual face.

After all—after all—shower upon me riches, power, place, fame, adulation, books, pleasures, nature, art, music—and although ye have filled me, still I thirst; but give me a fellow being with a mind; a human intelligence that

can meet mine in the splendid friction of thought for thought, and take away the rest; I am satisfied. I had come to San Zeffiro to be rid of my kind.

And the first being that I met who could talk with me was the object most cherished in my desert.

Such is man—or, rather, woman.

Padre Giglio stopped short under the window; there was a stone seat there, and he presently, half unconsciously, I believe, sat down on it; he kept his forefinger between the leaves of his book, and shut his lips tightly—he had taken off his cap.

"Padre Giglio!" cry I.

"Yes, Signorina—"

"Do you know that Nuccia has been telling me all about her vision of the Virgin."

His reverence frowns.

"Has she?" he answers quietly.

"You disapprove; why? I wish to know; do not fear to tell me, please."

"I disapprove, yes."

"But why?"

He raises his bright eyes to mine.

"Do not insist, Signorina."

"But I do. Women in my country always insist, or better, they never do. The ripe fruit falls into our mouths. We have no need of insistence."

"I believe you, Signorina."

"And you will tell me what I wish to know?

"Oh, yes." Padre Giglio shrugs his shoulders.

"Well?"

"Signorina, you have little sympathy—none I may venture to say—with Nuccia's vision. What does the North know of the sweet South wind?"

"Only that it blows over it sometimes," I murmur.

"Well, and what of that? Does it melt the glacier or turn the sea of ice into summer water? No!"

"You think I would only laugh to myself at Nuccia's dream, Padre Giglio?"

"As surely as you would laugh, always to yourself, Signorina, should I, the humble parish priest of San Zeffiro, lay bare to you—"

He stops short, opens his breviary and his lips mutter at the place where he left off reading when I called him to me.

"Lay bare to me the ache and penury and pitifulness of your life. That is what you think, Padre Giglio; is it not?"

"Ache, penury, pitifulness," he echoes, mildly. "I have no illness, Signorina; I am not too poor, and I ask no pity."

"Oh!" cry I impatiently; "perhaps not with your words, but do you suppose I can't see that you are starving to death here for lack of —of—men and women to exchange a thought with! How dare you say that I would laugh, and how dare you sit here in San Zeffiro reading a breviary and wasting your gifts when you might and ought to be out in the world fighting your fight and doing your work!" I throw the poppies in my hand down into the court to wither.

"Fighting my fight," the priest says dreamily, watching the green lizard that has now climbed the wall on our side again.

"'Doing my work,' why, Signorina, do you know I am so deluded a man as to believe, with all my heart, soul and strength, that I am 'doing my work' *here now*, and fighting my fight."

"Maybe."

"Nay, it is." He picks up the poppies and absently looks at them.

"Do you or do you not believe," I ask impatiently, "that Nuccia had a vision?"

"I do so believe."

"Really?"

"Yes, Signorina. You may laugh."

"I have no desire to."

He looks sharply at me.

"None whatever. I believe it, too."

"You!"

"I."

"Oh, blessed be God!" Padre Giglio murmurs, crossing himself.

"Are you so glad to find me capable of believing it?"

"Yes."

"It is true."

"Signorina—would you not come to San Stefano some day? You have not been inside our little church's door since you came to San Zeffiro. We have a pretty altar," he says simply as a child might, "and the lace on the curtains is indeed real."

"I will come," I answer.

Berta brings me my luncheon, and whilst I

eat Padre Giglio reads his book. Afterward he goes away, and I see him a little later toiling up the dusty roadway, carrying the blessed sacrament to a sick or dying one in some casale miles away.

The days slip by quietly enough at the *osteria.*

Often I find myself pacing up and down the court in the cool twilight, and instinctively I always pause by the stable door.

It is an ordinary portal, surely; that is, ordinary for this part of the world. The inside seems of hewn oak, rough and ill-finished, done in the days before planing was invented—the outer side, next the court, is apparently a thin casing and of much later date; it swings on stout leathern hinges, and is fastened with a strap and a couple of brass nails.

Poor Nuccia!

Of course I believed what she had seen. Are there not visions given to us, even as holy as this one, to help us on our tired pathways?

And Tino?

A large, heavy fellow, with enthusiasms as scorching as the noonday sun of an Italian Summer, and lulls of half-sullen stupor, when

he appeared as much of a brainless being as the large-eyed beasts he so faithfully tended. There seemed a kind of hopelessness in his whole air lately that I could not fail to observe; and with it Nuccia's laughter grew seldom, and the bright lights in her eyes seemed turning dim.

What did they say to each other? I often wondered as I watched them these soft, moonlighted Spring nights. When all the work of the farm and the household were finished; when Dame Berta nodded over her knitting; when Padre Giglio walked through the fields yonder, his tall silhouette sharp against the star-sown sky, communing with his own soul; when I sat by my open casement staring down at them.

Then they sat on the stone step, mossgrown, by the stable door—Nuccia, leaning her elbows on her knees, and her round chin in her palms. Tino beside her, bending and stroking her brown hair with his rough forefinger.

Talking to her in that low, cooing tone that was such a strange and happy contrast to his usual shrill and high-pitched voice.

"Nuccia mia, will it not be better so? Dost

thou think not with me? Always together, always, always, eh?"

"Always together," murmurs the girl plaintively.

"Si, always, forever, locked in each other's arms." Tino's dark face flushes to a swarthier crimson as he speaks.

"What dost thou think, carissima?"

"As thou dost," she answers mournfully.

"A little hurt," Tino whispers, "and then, Nuccia, happiness without end, eh?"

"Well," Nuccia replies, her head sinking lower and lower, until it falls upon the shoulder of her lover.

"As thou wilt."

One of the cows lows plaintively in its stall, a little cloud floats over the face of the lady moon. For a moment I see neither Nuccia nor Tino in their shadowy corner, but I hear a low, terrible scream, a dull thud, a groan, a heavier, crackling fall!

The cloud has passed.

Berta, roused from her dozing, rushes from the kitchen.

Nuccia lies bleeding below; Tino, with the sharp blade dripping and flashing in his hand,

has fallen from his wound so heavily that he has wrenched the stable door from one of its leathern hinges.

I dash down into the court.

Padre Giglio has reached home, and is there before me.

Nuccia speaks:

"Oh, *Madonna mia*—mother, dost thou not see her standing there?" She raises her glazing eyes to the doorway.

"Padre Giglio, Signorina, do you not see her? There! There!"

Do I or do I not?

I think that I do.

And Padre Giglio murmurs, "Yes, yes."

Neighbors flock in, and presently Nuccia is laid upon my bed, and men are watching beside Tino's mattress in the court.

Will they die?

Oh, no.

Tino, with his lusty arm and glittering knife, did his best to make of grim death their marriage priest, but Tino failed.

Nuccia's wound is slight and his own not mortal.

So the grieving, terror-stricken mother, the

priest and I watched by them until morning, aided by the neighbors and all the simple skill and medicine craft that San Zeffiro can boast.

At the end of a week Tino is limping and lounging about his work, scowling at every one, sitting in the sun in the mornings—for he is chilly—and throwing his knife up and down and watching it flash.

He is sorry that he aimed so ill and to so little purpose, and Padre Giglio, with breviary, rosary and crucifix as well, can make no repentant of Tino.

Nuccia lies pale and wan on the couch by my casement, praying aloud to the Blessed Virgin and all the saints of Heaven to forgive Tino and herself their awful crime.

The Padre's ministrations have here not fallen upon stony ground.

Every day, he, accompanied by Berta, strides up and sits by Nuccia for an hour, admonishing and cheering the poor child.

Ah, love! Well-a-day — to die for thee seems little loss and infinite gain when two love as did these two young creatures. The round world and all it contained, since fate bade them live apart, was an apple of Sodom

held up to the ruddy lips that thirsted for a river of life.

I dare to say the Spring sky, all blue as azure stained cloth, the green earth, pied with little daisies and sweet violets and glowing poppies, seemed a barren vault of darkness and an unfruitful clod to these two.

It was after one of Padre Giglio's visits that Nuccia turned to me, and pointing to the half-fallen stable door, whispered:

"Oh, Signorina, if it could be set up straight again; but do not ask Tino. Oh, no! Perhaps Padre Giglio would lift it if you asked him; he is a strong man."

"Very well," I answer, "I will. Now, suppose I ask him now. Eh, Nuccia?"

"Oh, Signorina, if you would. I long to see it in its place again, because then I think I may see *her* sometimes, as I lie here and watch."

"Do you watch for her, Nuccia?"

"Oh, indeed, yes, Signorina, all the time I lie here."

I nod brightly with a smile as I leave her.

Padre Giglio is willing enough to raise the half-fallen heavy door, while I assist him as

best I can, and Tino, impotent as to strength, looks sullenly on from the kitchen.

As soon as the door is righted and while Padre Giglio is replacing the nails in their holes, I perceive that the thin outer casing has been widely cracked by its fall; a little film of whitish dust marks the length of the crack. I touch my finger to it; I rub it; I feel the blood rush up into my face.

"Oh, Padre Giglio," I cry eagerly, "look! this is not ordinary dust, it is some sort of plaster, isn't it?"

All the wonderful tales I ever read or heard of concealed mural paintings rush in chaos through my delighted brain.

The priest runs his fingers lightly down the dusty crack and then touches his lips to it.

"Plaster, Signorina; there is something here. What shall I do?"

"Oh," cry I, "tear off this wooden casing or whatever it is, and let us see what we shall find!"

He does so.

His strong hands and the clumsy hammer and iron spike soon are busily at work prying off the thin wood facing.

Tino draws a step or two nearer to us, his sullen brows brightening a little; and Nuccia, breathless, leans out the window, watching Padre Giglio as intently as I.

Berta is heedless, washing her dishes.

Well, it is off—the last strip tumbles to the ground—and—

"Our blessed Lady!" murmurs little Nuccia half crying, half laughing up yonder.

Nuccia's vision of the twilight turned to a sweet reality by sunshine.

A veritable mural painting, done in distemper on plaster.

Probably it had formed, in some long dead day, the altar piece of the Lady Chapel of the convent, and pious hands had coffined it to save it from destruction.

There stood Mary, just as Nuccia had described her—a very mild little lady, clad in the gold-embroidered garments, sown all over with glittering punctured *Ave Marias;* Gabriel knelt at her feet, crowned with pink roses and bearing the lily branch in his hand. God the Father shone high in the heaven above, surrounded with the clustering angels, and below Him glittered the white dove of the Spirit.

Here cooed the pair of doves on their perch, just as the girl had described; there lay the flower garden before her, the birds in their cage, the open book, the little frisking rabbits.

Padre Giglio, with the hammer and the iron spike in his grasp, knelt down upon the pavement before the picure, and softly repeated the *Magnificat;* I could hear him as I bowed my head, for all that he spoke so low. Nuccia wept, Tino turned away silently, and Berta, awestruck, fell upon her knees.

"Well," I say as he rises, "I told you that I believed."

"Yes," he says simply, "I remember;" and then he takes a little water from the fountain on his handkerchief and rubs the painting carefully over.

How the colors glow and shine! how Gabriel's wreath of roses seems fresh, as if culled in the court of Heaven an hour ago! how vivid the scarlet of the Father's mantle; how shining Mary's splendid robe! how gay the flowers in her marble-paved garden! how beautiful the fine scroll-work on the portal of her house—

"A loving brush has painted this," says

Padre Giglio, standing back and shading his eyes with his hand as he speaks.

"Oh, yes, surely," I cry.

Indeed, I am in an ecstasy of delight that I can only parallel by my sensations when I recollect the day the leper's window was found in St. Martin's, at Canterbury.

"Do you know anything—much," I venture, "of mediæval art, Padre Giglio?"

"A little, Signorina," he answers, with a soft smile— a backward-looking smile, as if he remembered then other days than these at San Zeffiro.

"Could you—of course you can—place it, then. I see it by your expression of face—is it not so?"

"Ah, well, Signorina, I do not know. Perhaps."

"Tell me, tell me all you can," cry I, "because I wish to know, and because I am going to buy it, and carry it back with me to America!"

Padre Giglio is leaning, looking at the picture.

"It looks like Simone's work," he says slowly, shifting his position now and then, to obtain newer lights on the treasure-trove.

"Martini, I mean. Of him, you know, Petrarch wrote: 'Two surpassing painters have I known, Giotto the Florentine, whose fame is great among the moderns, and Simone of Siena. Look," his reverence says, starting and bending nearer to the picture; "what fine, persevering, tireless patience in the decorative parts! What tenderness, grace, pathos in the figures! Ah, call them stiff and wooden, if you choose, but the painters who painted in the springtide of art left their souls and hearts, their aspirations and faiths warm upon their works!" He speaks with an enthusiasm I had hardly believed him capable of.

I look at him.

He flushes—shrinks back into his old usual, subdued manner.

And I?

Well, after a great deal of writing back and forth to the *mercante* at Rome who owns the *osteria*, I succeed in buying from him the stable door for a song.

The picture, which I am pleased to consider as Nuccia's property, I buy from her; and with the two thousand lire thus acquired Tino and

she are thinking, planning, joyous, over their wedding preparations.

"Oh, Signorina," whispers the girl, grown almost well and strong again, "how well I knew the blessed Virgin would help Tino and me—how well I knew. And, Signorina, when the picture hangs in your grand drawing-room far away in America, you will remember Nuccia, and all the happiness you have given to her, and—"

"Her lover," I finish, touching her pink cheek lightly. "Eh! Nuccia?"

I am going away from San Zeffiro soon, now —in fact, to-morrow the Virgin and I and my boxes will be safely stowed in the crazy old diligence that lumbers through the village once a week, and presently we shall be back in Paris.

It is after supper, and Padre Giglio is reading his breviary in the court. Nuccia and Tino are chatting yonder in the gallery, and Berta has gone to talk over for the hundredth time the wonderful luck and honor of her household with her neighbors.

"You know I am going to-morrow, Padre Giglio," I say lightly.

"Yes, Signorina," without glancing toward me.

"And, oh, Padre Giglio, now, before I go, tell me really what you think of Nuccia's vision."

"I believe it."

"Clairvoyance," say I, succinctly.

The priest shrugs his shoulders.

"Not clairvoyance?"

He shakes his head.

The book falls to his knee, and his keen eyes search the wide landscape, questioning of it—what?

They are so sad, those keen gray eyes of his, that suddenly they make me remember my old, first fancy of Padre Giglio's having had a story away back somewhere in his youth, before he became a priest, I suppose.

"Padre Giglio, I am thinking of you."

"Yes, Signorina." He does not move his gaze.

"Why do you not ask me what it is that I am thinking?"

"Well, Signorina?" His reverence turns his head—not his eyes—toward me.

"I am wondering about the story that lies away back in your life somewhere. I see its memories haunt you still." I am dabbling my

fingers in the water of the fountain basin as I speak.

"Away back in my life somewhere," he repeats mechanically after me. "Perhaps, Signorina, the story is not even so far removed as yesterday — who knows but it may be of to-day?" As he speaks he rises, not looking at or heeding me; the book falls to the ground; passes out of the court and away from me. I never see him again.

I pick up the breviary, and as I do there flutter to the ground some faded poppies, pressed thin and purple—their stain is not an old one on the leaf.

I have them both, Simone's picture of the "Annunciation," painted on the stable door of the Osteria of San Zeffiro, and Padre Giglio's prayer-book.

I shall not ever part with either one, or the faded, filmy poppies that lie pressed between the leaves.

At the Sign of the Shippe

✝

"HOLD! I beseech you, Josephine, my good excellent Josephine! Is it not altogether monstrous, incredible, insufferable, damnable? Oh, yes!" Lady Desirée Beauchamp stamped her foot and crossed herself piously at one and the same moment as she spoke to her waiting woman.

"'Damnable,' I repeat, that my English papa, before following my adored French mamma to heaven, should have put in his will that I was to marry a detestable English cousin named Sir Francis Whiting, whom never set I eye upon, though upon many other fine gentlemen since I left the convent, and at the French court have spent months in the train of the Princess herself. Speak, you wretched old beloved Josephine, and tell me if 'tis not

most monstrous and — and — detestable — then?"

"Alas, Miladi, 'tis as you say, but the wills of the papas must then be obeyed, since with them also goes the fortune, eh?"

"Josephine! 'Obeyed!' What sort of a spirit have you, then? I will tell you: that of a flea—no more. Here am I come over to this horrible England, arrested on my journey to Beauchamp Castle by such a weather as would please, no doubt, the sainted Monsieur Noah; compelled, by fog, mist, rain, thunder, to remain in the worst inn in the kingdom; to stop in Hastings until the sun shine once more — and then, Blessed Virgin! to set forth to meet the man whom my papa says I am to marry!"

"Alas, Miladi. Yet it is best to be thankful that there is a husband safely provided, eh?"

"Josephine!" Desirée now threw her little embroidered gloves at Josephine's face. The old woman laughed as she escaped them.

"Josephine," repeated the young mistress, authoritatively, "is it not true that I am now four-and-twenty?" Josephine bowed her

head. "With a will of my own, a fortune of my own, two feet of my own, a head on my shoulders?" Josephine assented to all these propositions.

"Then," continued Desirée, pacing up and down the pavilion outside the windows of her apartment in the Shippe Inn, "I shall use them. Hold! my amiable Josephine. I have read of Queens who took their own way and refused to do as Parliaments and councilors said they must. I will emulate them; listen, Josephine. Papa is safe, you know, in Père-la-Chaise; you will obey me; there is no one to defy or coerce me, except the abominable creature who has never seen me, that is Sir Francis. Now, he never shall see me. I shall lose myself! Me! Desirée Beauchamp, utterly, and, instead, here in this fishy, wet, execrable inn, shall come to life quite another lady!"

The good Josephine opened and shut her eyes fiercely in mute astonishment.

"Quite another, Josephine—a married lady, aye, by my faith! A husband!"

"Mademoiselle!" cried the faithful servant, in horror, sinking on her knees.

"Who is he? Where is he? What is he?"

"Hush-h, Josephine," whispered Desirée, her little finger on her red lips, laughing eyes sparkling, feet dancing up and down the pavilion. "He is a man! Oh, yes! He is also dead, like papa! He is—listen—or he was once on a time, the Duke of Dudleigh."

"Alas! my little child, my blessed one, my adored mistress is mad!" sobbed Josephine. "Is it not true that the Earl of Dudleigh, the nephew of your sainted papa's oldest friend, was lost at sea now these five years ago, and that among the luggage of Miladi is to be found yonder the grand portrait of Milord Dudleigh, which was completed by Mademoiselle Kaufman just previous to his sudden demise, and which we are taking home to his respected uncle as a souvenir? Miladi! Miladi!" Josephine bobbed up and down the pavilion after her young mistress as fast as she could, tears of terror in her eyes, hands tremblingly outstretched to her wayward darling.

But Desirée only flounced and laughed the more, flirting her ruffled petticoats as she tripped curtseying to imaginary cavaliers, kissing her pretty finger-tips to fancied milords as she sang:

Oh, fa la-la-la-la-la!
Flower de luce and roses of musk;
Gillies and peonies, grown in the dusk;
Pick me a posy
Round as a rosy!
Hither I'll tuck it, safe under my busk.
Marjoram, lavender, daffodils, too.
Never a bud of the cypress or rue.
Naught but gay blooms, oh, lover so true,
For me! and for, fa-la-la! even you!

And at the end, bringing up and down on her knees at Josephine's side, burying her lovely face in the old arms that had sheltered her through a motherless ehildhood, in the convent, and out of it, at Versailles.

"Oh, Josephine; yes, Lord Dudleigh was lost at sea, that is true; also his portrait is there within; go fetch it at once; so, set it up on these two chairs that I may look upon the lineaments of my worshiped and departed lord!"

Desirée stood now gazing upon the portrait which the frightened abigail arranged as she was bid. 'Twas in sooth the counterfeit presentment of a very handsome young gentleman tricked out in velvets, satins, wig and sword, with eyes as black as sloes and a smile lingering about the corners of his mouth.

"Look you, now, Josephine, and listen: henceforth your mistress is Duchess of Dudleigh, a widow, and here, this moment, forever, we bury between these walls Lady Desirée Beauchamp. She is no more; in her stead Lady Dudleigh, and thus by the mere clicking of our tongues do we perform a marriage, rid ourselves of a spinster, inter a husband, free me forever from the possibility of having to marry Sir Francis Whiting—since he can never now find me—and no harm to any one, since Lord Dudleigh, being in purgatory," Lady Desirée again crossed herself, "may not object to a wife he cannot behold!" Josephine shook her head and muttered an *ave*.

Desirée caught a glimpse of herself in the mirror, and with all the careless gaiety of her French mother and the buoyant courage of her English father, she ran across to the beautiful image and kissed it again and again.

"*Tiens, ma belle!*" cried she to herself, while the respectable Josephine murmured more *aves*. "It is a new life that we shall lead now. We are married! We can do as we choose. We can speak with greatest freedom. We can regard the gentlemen and walk with

them in the arbors, the theatres, the promenades without a chaperone! Behold, my dearest Desirée!" More kisses gave this charming young personage to her own brilliant reflection, lips of flesh meeting lips of shadow, with a puff of sweetest breath and eyes full of mirth.

"Behold, how the whim of a young lady out of France can transform you from a no one, a simple maiden—into—an enticing widow!"

Josephine groaned.

"*Mon bien aimé*," continued Desirée, whirling herself around before the portrait of the late Duke of Dudleigh and placing her forefinger caressingly on his chin, "I will keep flowers always, always—do you hear, Josephine?—in front of your image." And Desirée filled a vase with water and stuck her posies into it on a stand near the picture, as she discreetly covered it with Josephine's cloak.

"And, Josephine, you will descend to the good innkeeper and remark to him that now I am willing he should know my name and estate, the Duchess of Dudleigh, from Paris! And I shall rest here for a time, and I shall receive with pleasure the cards and visits of any

the nobility of the town, since I am quite
t of mourning for the late Duke, and that I
ll be served with breakfast here. Let it be
layed only so long as it shall take me for a
let and you to do my hair in the English
hion. Away with you, Josephine! No,
, no! Do not remonstrate, for I would
rry myself impromptu to twenty dead-and-
ne gentlemen of quality sooner than become
: wife of this Sir Francis Whiting, whom,
seen, I despise!"

Obediently the aged serving woman left the
artment on her errand, as her young mis-
ss quitted it by the opposite door, and, as
:k had it, there entered from the garden,
ning into the pavilion, two very splendid
ung gentlemen, who, 'twas easily seen, were
w to this environment, though such bucks
fashion and accustomed to the world as to
quickly at ease wheresoever chance might
st them.

"Zounds! Jack," cried Sir Seven-and-twenty,
ling into a chair. "The jade smiles not on
:, since Boniface avers, and Jack Tar, too,
'll have to tarry tide and wind here for the
ght at least, and I that impatient to get out

of England as was never man before since the world began."

"Tut, Francis, lad; put up your frowns, pocket 'em, sir; take out your smiles, for of a surety 'tis a laughing matter." And Captain Copeland bestrode a bench and was like to split his sides with overmirthfulness.

"Damme, sir! your levity is misplaced," cried Sir Francis Whiting, moodily pacing up and down.

"You are in error, sir. Once over in Paris or back in London will I put it to the test of any company of wits and gallants and gentlemen of the first honor, that this latest escapade of Sir Francis Whiting's doth exceed by far any of its innumerable predecessors!" Copeland laughed.

"Escapade, sir? Nay, 'tis serious; s'death! Most serious, for is not a man that's running away from the noose in a devilish grave predicament?"

"A noose! By George, sir, a noose matrimonial, with a lovely young lady out of France to pull it tight, and fifty thousand pounds to her dowry's not the species of knot most pretty fellows 'd be a going into exile to

void! Zooks, Francis, but you're a damnable
iot!"

"Aye," returned t'other, "and I'd be what,
ayed I here to be married out of hand, on
ccount of my uncle's will, to his daughter,
ho had a French mother, was bred in a con-
nt and Louis' court; maybe as ugly as my
arwoman, and to whom I've never had the
iance of even making one half-hour's love!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roars the Captain; "there's
e rub, 'making love!' Rot me, sir, an' you
aven't made it to this particular one, 'tis, at
e least computation, a thousand proxies she's
ad to stand for her, in the past. Marry her,
r, and make love to her afterward, say I!"

"Jack, as you love me, counsel me not so.
'is a scurvy sort of marriage that's made by
dead man's testament only. Rake though I
ay have been, yet would I have chances to
oo the lady I'd make into my wife, not have
er thrown into my arms unsought. Prithee,
r, desert me not now in my extremity, but
ive me your company into France, whence I
arn the Lady Desirée hath set sail these two
ays back. Thus do I escape her, since I
ave left my whereabouts to no one save only

you. A year's absence from England, and God grant her safe wedded to some other than your poor friend. Oh, Jack, go out, consult the clouds, the waves, the sailors and the landlord. Bring me back good tidings that we may embark to-night."

"Francis, well you know I'd serve you to the last dregs of my blood." Copeland lays his arm affectionately about his companion as he adds: "Do you then persist in the incognito? and must you hereafter be addressed as simply Mr. Greville?"

The younger man nods emphatically.

"Mr. Greville I must be, Jack, for the time of my absence, from this day on for the twelvemonth belike, for 'tis of a piece with her father's daughter that this windfall bride seek me out, hither and yon. So, sir, is Francis Whiting lost, I swear, and never shall the Lady Desirée Beauchamp find him, if he can help. Dear Jack, away, prithee, for I die here, I suffocate, and would rather risk a hurricane than tarry an hour longer where I am at the mercy, mayhap, of an emissary from my cousin bride-elect at any moment, should my departure from town have been discovered."

Sir Francis strode up and down the parlor, moody, whiles the Captain sallied forth good-humoredly on his quest. Presently the young man's eyes spied an embroidered glove upon the floor. He stooped and picked it up—dainty, small, perfumed—what a tale it told to this inflammable gallant! How he longed, to be sure, to catch a glimpse of the owner! How to his imagination he pictured her fairer than all other creatures! How in a trice a thousand ladies slipped the leash of his fickle memory! How Desirée, too, was forgot, and all he panted, thirsted for, faith! was to behold her who presently stood on the threshold, a-gazing at him with such arch eyes, such smiling lips, such blushes, spying well her fallal in his hand, as caused him such a palpitation at his heart as never before had he experienced.

"And, madame," quoth he, down to the ground.

"And, sir," curtseyed she, doing fine credit to her six months at Versailles in the train of the Princess Royal.

And thereafter such a ready flow of conversation, wit, repartee, semi-confidences and laughter as would have surprised their re-

spective parents exceedingly could they but have been present.

"La, Mr. Greville," says Desirée, "you can't imagine, sir, what this encounter with a gentleman of quality here to-day is to me!"

The minx thereat sighed and actually ogled not only her living companion but the cloak which covered the late Duke's portrait.

"Your ladyship," returns he, "I can never for a moment figure to myself what meeting you means to me. This is the happiest day of my life, I swear."

"Nay, sir, Mr. Greville, prostest not, I entreat. You do not surmise how grateful 'tis to one—who—alas!" The sweet fox! Now does she pull her pocket napkin suddenly from her bodice and sweep it over her eyes.

"Most engaging creature!" cries the young man under his breath as he fingers the lappet of the supposed Duchess of Dudleigh's cap. "I beseech you, if there is sorrow, confide it to me. Can I in any fashion serve you? Oh, speak!"

"Nay, sir, nay; pardon my emotion. 'Tis but five years since I was deprived of my natural protector." Desirée rises discreetly and crosses, leaning by the chairs which support

the portrait of her usurped lord. "By cruel fate," continues she, "and 'tis monstrous hard, Mr. Greville, for a lady to do battle with the world—alone!"

Sir Francis at this sighing sally was like to fall upon his knees and call Jove to witness here was he, a knight only too willing to stand betwixt this fair and any danger on earth, when Lady Desirée, his cousin, whips the cloak off from the Duke's portrait, and says she:

"Look you, sir, on the image of him I have lost!"

"'Tis a goodly gentleman, I swear, madam; yet," turning up the room and pecking at his snuff-box, "of a surety, high heaven never intended that so lovely a lady should spend her years a-moping for one who's long since turned to dust."

"Ah-h-h," sighs her ladyship mournful, and then whisking the cloth over the portrait and herself off to the door, where she sees Josephine, and, twirling the good woman about with a will, under breath whispering:

"Tut, tut, my Josephine, begone. I am married, remember, and can entertain gentlemen alone!"

Then, no sooner the abigail out of sight, Sir Francis, still with her glove in his possession, and about, it would seem, to declare at least a portion of his passion, than enter, obsequious, salaaming, Boniface to announce that the Lady Mayoress, the Countess of Berks, her Ladyship of Rutland, the Hon. Misses Montressor, a dozen more of the quality awaited her Grace's pleasure below, and would be honored to pay their respects to her. And, sweeping such a court curtsey, with such languishing eyes to Sir Francis as put him into a frenzy, off steps my Lady Desirée to receive her new acquaintances just as in pops Captain Copeland, of the Guards, by t'other entrance, rubbing his hands in gleeful triumph.

"Francis, lad," quoth this one, with a fine slap on his friend's broad back, "on with your voyage coat, sir. Clap on your wrap-rascal. 'Tis cold at sea, I promise you. I've sent the boxes aboard; the tide rises, the storm lulls, the ship creaks, the Captain tarries but for you. Come, I say!"

"Tide! Ship! Captain! Aboard! Jack, what d'ye mean? Are you mad?"

"S'life, sir! Are you?" retorts the Cap-

tain, standing stockstill, dumfounded, a-staring at Sir Francis with the Lady Desirée's glove pressed betwixt his palms, his mien ecstatic and his color high.

"Nay, nay, Jack, 'pon my soul, I had forgot. Aye! to be sure. Gad! I—I—I've been a-thinking since you quit me, and—"

"Have ye?" queries the Captain, pricking the jeweled glove with the tip of his scabbard, and bursting into a peal of laughter.

"Ah-hem," coughs Francis, nettled. "Look you, Jack. I've no mind for crossing into France to-night; truth to tell, I've a bad opinion of trusting ourselves to the mercy of the deep with a sky like that."

"Blue as indigo," remarks the Captain.

"Well, well, I would say the sea's treacherous and—er—"

"Have a care, lad; the hand that's wont to harbor in this may be treacherous, too," smiling and twitching Desirée's glove.

"Oh, Jack," bursts forth Sir Francis, no more tongue-tied, but clapping at both ends and in the middle, too. "Such a form and face! Such feet, so small, I swear, as both 'd lie safe 'sconced in my palm. Such eyes! and

lips that spell but kiss with every curve and utterance. Such locks, such arms, such manners, methods, motions, as were sainted Anthony once more put to test he'd beg her have banns read with him or ever this day's sun had set. Ah-h!"

Then the Captain spoke, after a pause, cocking his eyes at Sir Francis.

"Well, sir, no more? Ha! ha! ha! Hastings is a devilish fine town, I dare be sworn, eh? No fear of cousin-brides, now, eh? The Shippe is the best inn in the world, eh? No year's absence from England, now, eh? Ha! ha! ha! Well, lad, my humor tallies with your own. Hist, hearken. I did spy, anon in the yard, a pretty pair arriving from London, bound, too, they whispered, for France, but unable to proceed for that one of 'em was indisposed. Two strollers of a company that travels in and out 'twixt London and Paris. One, sir, her that's got black eyes—oh! tell me not of your Fair or we'll come to duelling, for never clapt I eyes on such an exquisite creature. Francis, I'd rather lose a thousand pounds than leave so much beauty behind me unspoken to; therefore 'tis I'll stop in Hastings till doomsday

with your whim, and here's to my stroller and your Fair." The gallant Captain poured himself a bumper from the decanter on the sideboard in the pavilion, and was about to proceed, when in comes Boniface, reluctant, hat on head, shoulders shrugging, followed by two in hoods and cloaks and veils.

"S'life!" cries Sir Francis, under breath: "An' this be not my Cousin Desirée, mayhap a-seeking me, I am lucky. Jack, away with us."

"Nay," whispers the Captain, "I'd stop; it is my Fair."

"Gad, sir! What if 'tis? Here and now's no time to be ogling a lady. Come."

"Oh, is't not, eh?" answers Jack, tweaking Desirée's glove, which haply sticks fingers out from Sir Francis' pocket-flap.

The two gentlemen once departed, Boniface says, more complaisant:

"A great lady of quality has the use of this room, not to the exclusion of the pavilion for common guests. We entertain none but persons of the highest distinction, yet since you are willing to pay in advance, even the Shippe will not turn away players. Supper is ten

pence in the ordinary. Jennie will show you to your chambers directly." And out he goes lofty, yet fingering his sovereigns greedily.

"Sophia!" exclaims one, tearing her veil from her beautiful face. "I shall die, die! of mortification and fright. Lud! That a creature of my sensibility and birth should be put to such a plight! What must not my passion for Dudleigh be when, thus distraught, I fly to him in the teeth of my parents' express commands; that with you, my beloved and faithful Sophia, I undertook this journey from town to Hastings, here to meet my adored Ralph, hence in the packet to France, and there to be made—"

"His wife," cries the lively Sophia, stripping off her veil, cloak and hood.

"Lud! Belinda, who'd not undertake a like adventure for a gallant that worshiped her at t'other end of the string? But 'twas a merry thought of mine, and an apt, sweetest heart, when Boots asked of our station and demands, to say forth boldly: 'We're members of Master Cope's company of strollers, *en route* to France to perform before the court!' I'll tell thee what 'twas inspired me. A pair of

eyes! Aye! Blue as my best paduasoy, laughing as my lips, brimful of mischief as my pate. He stood—oh, 'twas a he; wager your life on it!—just at the coach steps as we descended, and peradventure his sword caught in my ribbons! and my heart was caught in his glance. Aye! 'twas he, that vanished as we came."

"But, dearest Sophia, I implore you to use discretion," whispered Belinda, trembling.

"That for discretion!" answered the volatile Sophia, snapping her fingers in the air. "As we're comedians, dear heart, we must be merry, no ''fraid-cats'; full of capers, frolics, thus!" Lady Sophia picks up her flounces betwixt dainty forefingers and thumbs, sky-high, and minces, miming Signorina Figuranti, of Covent Garden, as that renowned person was in the custom of performing nightly to the admiration of the best *ton* of the town.

"Lud, Sophia!" Belinda shook her head, while she perforce applauded the skill and grace of her companion.

"Gad!" cried the Captain (unseen at the door), under his breath, his person half enveloped in the folds of the curtains, as he spied, glass up to eye.

Then blustering comes Boniface, followed by his dame and half a dozen boys and wenches.

"Give place, give place!" bellows he, portentous. "Out with ye all! Baggages! I say, make off, and quickly. Her Grace and her guests are coming hither for refreshment! Out, out, I say!" and, as he was about to accelerate the pace of the terrified Ladies Belinda and Sophia, ably seconded by his train of menials, with: "No room here for impudent comedians. Off, off!" out pops the Captain and sends the landlord spinning; Jennies, James, dame, all in his wake, pell-mell (affrighted by such an example of brawn and lung as was given by the doughty guardsman).

"To thus maltreat and flout the fairest ladies under the sun!" quoth he, preserving a touch still about the slender waist of the bewitching Sophia.

"I assure you nothing would afford her Grace such pleasure as to entertain the players. But now, with my friend, Mr. Greville, in the gardens, I enlisted her sympathies and patronage to detain you here for the night and give us the benefit of your accomplishments."

"Oh, sir!" whimpers Lady Belinda, really in a terrible fright at the falsity of her situation, clinging to the Captain's arm and like to break down here and now and confide all to his ear.

But not so Lady Sophia. Up prances the minx, heart high to any mischief, and finding naught but entertainment in the adventure.

"Lud, sir," says she, clapping hand over Belinda's quivering lip, "nothing in the world would please us more than give such a fine gentleman and his friends all the diversion we can. My friend, Mistress Pouncet here, I do swear's the best voice at a song of sentiment one has heard."

"And you? Nay!" cried Captain Copeland, bowing profoundly. "Since anon I beheld you trip a measure, sure Figuranti's nowhere! Prithee, mistress, your name?"

"Moll Moppettus," answers she glib, while Belinda stared, "of Drury Lane," sweeping a curtsey to the ground, as in entered, trooping, Desirée, Sir Francis leading her by the hand grandly, and these two followed by the Lady Mayoress, her five bouncing daughters, the Countess of Berks and her seven stalwart

sons, Lady Rutland and her asthmatic Lord, the Misses Montressor, all sidling, bridling, ogling provincial-wise and striving to be heard and seen above each other in the eyes of this fine town lady, a Duchess come among them. La! 'Twas a godsend Hastings had not seen in threescore years.

Then amid the clatter, the Captain whispers Lady Desirée, and with many nods, glances, etceteras, betwixt these two and Sir Francis, 'tis presently arranged that within the half hour after supper "Mistress Pouncet and Mistress Moppettus, from Drury Lane, *en route* to Paris, will entertain the company with a show of their justly celebrated and sublime feats of dancing and vocal music."

"Pray you, Captain Copeland, lead these worthy persons to the ordinary and see them well entertained at my expense," says Desirée, loftily, waving her fan and nodding benevolently to the supposed strollers, as the Captain fulfills her behest.

Then turns she, glancing halfway toward Sir Francis, who, like unto a fly caught in the cup of a flower, quits her not, toward the company and welcomes them as some young Princess of

the realm. Catches she her own image beside Sir Francis in the mirror, and she thinks:

"Aye, sweet fool, Desirée, 'twas much you learned, girl, at the court of France that stands you in good stead to-day."

Then to the guests, bringing out, of a surety, the perfumed pocket napkin as she speaks:

"I would, indeed, good friends, make a grand ball for your pleasure, save that, albeit five years of widowhood should have tempered my grief, yet I can not bring my sorrowing heart even now to the light fantastic. Look you, I pray," Desirée pulled aside Josephine's cloak, revealing the portrait of the Duke, "and judge if so goodly a lord were not worthy his lady's tears?" and the sweet fox actually affected to weep, ogling Sir Francis o'ertop of her cambric meantime.

Then such a chorus as broke forth of "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" and "Las!" and "Luds!" such sighs and purse-ups, and sympathetic groans, shakes of heads and waggings of wigs and plumes, broke up haply now by music from the terrace, no doubt whatever the merry-thought of the Captain. This attracted the swaying spirits of her guests, and Lady De-

sirée beheld them swarming without, where cakes and chocolate, tea and buns were partaken of, served by Boniface, egged on by the Captain at Sophia's elbow, to the tune of "Jennie Whipped the Syllabub."

"Ah, me!" sighs Desirée, turning from the gay company and unhooking, belike by accident, the curtains, as she came on toward her lord's portrait.

"Nay, fairest lady, sigh no more, I implore," says Sir Francis, plainting himself profoundly enough to move a heart of stone.

"Oh, sir," whimpers she, the more moved to lament the past since it doth urge the present to the greater pressing of his suit.

"Mr. Greville, you cannot figure to yourself the loss of that blest of all blessings, a true husband!"

"Nay, your Grace, that can I not," says he, smile lurking at mouth corner. "But can I perchance do next best thing?"

"What's that, Mr. Greville?" asks she, feigning innocence.

"Attempt," replies Francis, seizing her hand, "the task of blotting from your memory the image of him that's gone." Sly-boots

shakes her head most mournfully and fetches a frightful sigh.

"And put in 's place another! One whose passion for you, most adorable of beings, now gets the better of time, place, discretion, everything."

Down on his knees, hands clasped, beseeching, the hem of her gown caught to his lips, eyes rolling in splendid frenzy; her ladyship agog, insatiate, smiling, pouting, as she feigns to twitch away her brocade, when, without:

Hilly! oh! ho! oho! oho! Clatter! bang! splash! shriek! faint! swoon! Hoofs! oaths! whipsnaps! brickbats! stones! maids! men! Boniface, Dame! Jimmy! Neighings! cacklings! dust! splinters! (Lady Belinda, in a collapse, believing her father has overtaken her flight, carried by the Captain to the taproom and laid upon the counter. Lady Sophia clapping her palms and soles violently.) The Lady Mayoress and her daughters, the Countess and her sons, Lady Rutland and her spouse, the Misses Montressor, Josephine and all the gay company rushing in, pushing and struggling, from the pavilion and the gardens to find out whatever was the matter.

Sir Francis to his feet in a trice, Desirée a-fluttering of her fan, composed, but in her heart a-cursing monstrous that such a hubbub should have come at such a moment.

"Lud," says she, "what's this, Mr. Greville?" as stout stable boys bear into the room upon a plank a bleeding, stricken form, dust-covered from crown of comely head to heel of spurred boot; by the cut of his garments and by the look of his countenance, a gentleman of the first quality. Zounds! all the fair that craned to scan him shrieked in horror—mud-plastered, blood-painted, wig still clinging to throat; non-recognizable for any friend, were any here to stare.

In comes the Captain, quick of thought and deed, waving back the company, hushing the ladies' groans, turning the doleful maids face-about.

"Where's the water?" says he imperious, and searching the wounded man's pockets in search of some clue to his identity.

Desirée motions to Josephine, who fetches the basin, cloth and essences, and she herself, with dainty ministerings, mops and washes, gently, the hands and brow of him who lies there silent.

Sir Francis, watching, jealous, wishful that he were the one whose horse had kicked at Desirée's door of mercy.

The Captain, meantime, emptying the pockets of the unfortunate, tosses out sovereigns, shillings, bank-notes a plenty, wig-combs, pomatum, watches three, laced napkins, a brace of snuff-boxes, a golden case, from which, too, evidently the miniature of some fair one had been ruthlessly struck at the time of the owner's almost fatal throw from his runaway steed. And, ha! Yes, by jingo, a letter at last! addressed to whom? All present bent to hear the name or title of the prostrate form, reposing on the supposed Duchess of Dudleigh's couch, whose face just now her Grace was wiping free from at least the cruel marks of its fall.

The Captain pursed his lips, then says he quite aloud, being a doughty personage and apt to jump into the middle of things rather than to take a roundabout course—says he, reading the superscription of the broken-sealed letter:

"His Grace, the Duke of Dudleigh, at Lisle Street, Leicester Fields, London."

And, as the assembled company heard the name, their five-and-forty pairs of eyes beheld the now visible and pallid face of the new arrival; and also flew from its perusal, gaping, to that of the portrait of the Duke, set up on the two chairs; and, all at once, cried they, monstrous amazed: "Your Grace's husband!"

And Desirée, looking, beheld the facts, as did the excellent Josephine and the now melancholy Sir Francis.

"Good sirs, ladies, my lords and gentlemen," cries the Captain, valorous and ready to throw himself into the breach, "let's away and leave this lady with her lord. Since she hath believed him dead, so much the more must be her joy at his restoration, and strange must be his tale to be poured into her ears. 'Twas doubtless she he sought at such break-neck speed that spilled him, God be thanked! into her arms. Come, sirs, ladies all, I say, away! to fetch the surgeons!"

And it is his province, of a necessity, to pluck Sir Francis by the sleeve and rouse him from a kind of lethargy into which the revelation of Desirée's husband, alive and even now returning to consciousness, had put him.

Her Grace says no word; of a truth, so extraordinary is her fright and the turmoil of her spirit, torn 'twixt love of Francis, hatred of her own deceits, abhorrence of and bewilderment at her situation, as for the nonce to render her speechless.

Then as the eyelids of her *disant* lord make to quiver and his fingers to catch at her own, he lying, head upon her lap, says she, melancholy, distract, crying out to Francis:

"Prithee, Mr. Greville, quit me not as yet. I beg, sir, that you stop, for I need help, man's help! 'Tis so long since—I—since I had husband, I must e'en have time to once more use myself to it, and never! never!"—rising and giving her place to Josephine—"had I patience, skill or practice in nursing of the sick or wounded. Pray you, let the others go, but you—stop!" and she cast so great a look of combined wretchedness, humiliation and love upon him as no gentleman, save an Icelander out of the Arctic pole, could withstand.

So it was that anon the Duke opened his handsome eyes and beheld Desirée standing, leaning over the side of the couch, while Sir Francis, discreet, hovered at the doorway,

scarce able to abide the sight of this reunited pair, and each moment watching his opportunity to call in the Captain as his substitute and make off to throw himself headlong over the cliffs.

"Now, where the devil am I?" cried the Duke of Dudleigh, feebly essaying to raise himself on his elbow, as off makes Sir Francis, pushing in with frantic haste the returned Captain and a pair of ship's surgeons, haled from their beer and pipes below.

Then much ado of examination as to bones, ribs, heart, brain, and so forth, Josephine sent with slips to the apothecary, liniments to be used, pills and potions to be administered and his Grace, the learned men say, no whit the worse of his tumble save a not unnatural weakness of his limbs "likely to pass over," murmur they in concert as they depart, bowing obsequiously to Desirée, "under care of so diligent a nurse as the Duchess is sure to prove."

"Duchess!" exclaims his Grace, with wide eyes staring at Desirée lurking at the door, two such fine roses in her cheeks, and of a red so deep as never in lady's garden grew before. Yet remained she silent, overcome, nor daring

either to plunge deeper into lies or back to that truth which looked now to her as Satan's own quagmire.

"Aye," returns the Captain, jovially. "'Tis not, I promise you, sir, every gentleman that can boast of dying at sea, leaving behind him a creature so beautiful; returning as by a miracle (which you shall unriddle to her Grace's ears alone anon) five years later to find a widow unwed, and to this hour that constant in her affection as causes her to set up this!"—now wheeling the portrait about in front of the wounded gentleman—"in every inn she tarries at but for a night, and to expound her love and duty to the past i' the very teeth of much pleasure offering for the future. Sir," concludes Copeland, bowing and not noticing the wild, distract aspect of the Duke, "I humbly take my leave of you, and wish you joy of your most adorable recovered paradise!" Off whisks the Captain, not omitting to pull Josephine with him, nor to bestow upon Desirée that gentle impetus which sends her across to the side of the prostrate nobleman.

"'Widow!' 'Five years!' 'Love and duty!'" echoes this one, clapping his brow and staring

with almost maniacal eyes at his own counterfeit presentment. Then, starting up and pacing the floor, cries he, pinching himself:

"Who am I? How lost I my wits? What place is this? Who are you?" as he pauses before his *soi-disant* lady.

Desirée cowers. Valorous-blooded though she be, she hesitates to answer either of one fashion or 'tother.

"Who are you, I say?" shouts the Duke, seizing her by the arm. "S'life, madame, I'd be answered!" and with no mean strength his Grace shakes Lady Desirée Beauchamp much of the method one might employ for a refractory child. At this she screams piercingly and back from the corridor rushes the Captain to find the wounded gentleman, arms uplifted, sword brandishing, eye of fire, jaw set, and Desirée like to swoon by the couch.

"What's this? tut, tut, sir! Zounds! sir! a gentleman that's recovered such a wife, sir, should be ashamed to use her thus; fie upon your Grace!"

"Wife!" echoes Dudleigh, "I have no wife. Came I here seeking one!" says he frantic.

"Behold her!" cries the Captain, taking

Lady Desirée by the hand and muttering to her under breath:

"Humor him, madam; let him have his whim; belike the blood's up to his brain, and for a season your husband's bereaved of his wits. 'Tis not out of custom after so bad a fall as he's had. Be gentle with him and cry him aye for aye, each fable that he babbles, else I'll not answer for the consequence."

"'Behold her,' repeats the Duke, surveying Desirée, his glance reverting to the portrait. "Aye, mayhap my wits are woolgathering. True 'tis, I five years since was lost at sea, nor ever regained England from a sojourn in the Indies, where the natives had rescued and succored me, until this two months past. Back in London I did encounter one." Dudleigh passes his hand across his brow and turns up toward the pavilion, muttering to himself thus:

"'Tis not my own Belinda, I swear't. Gad! Am I mad? Yet, the portrait's me to the life. I'll not be a fool, whatever else! Since fate provides me a wife that's passing fair and adorable, why I'll e'en accept her and let fortune's wheel turn 'round the next move in this comedy."

And whiles his Grace thus, the Captain this to Desirée:

"Nay, your Grace, take heart. He's but mad for the nonce. I leave you now, together; your charms will soon medicine your lord back into his brains."

"Prithee, sir! Captain Copeland," says she, "take me with you! Call my woman and my serving men. I'd hence and with despatch. Nay!" clinging to the Captain, who with some force is now compelled to disengage her grasp, "I'll not stop in this room another second!"

"Hold! sir!" now exclaims Dudleigh, rushing down to Desirée and clasping her waist. "What's this? my lady, my wife! a-clinging to another! By heavens, madam, sir, this must be accounted for when I am recovered. Begone! I say. I swear you'll find me able to protect and cherish her! Begone!"

Nor does Copeland await further intimation, but flies back, willing, eager to reassure his Fair and her companion that 'tis a husband that's arrived and not a father

The door once closed upon the Captain's retreat, his Grace of Dudleigh leads Desirée

a seat, and casting himself into another, ys he, lightsome:

"Sweet lady of my heart and name, let's sup gether. There's viands upon the sideboard, ıen in the press, I do perceive. Prithee, like dutiful spouse, spread the cloth and we'll to eat and drink."

"Me spread the cloth?" returned she, disinful. "Never! call in the lackeys and the ırders, sir, or spread it yourself!" and in passion, mixed of shame, anger, hurt pride, ıd honied, bitter-sweet with thoughts of Sir rancis, Desirée flounces up and down.

"But you shall, I swear," returns he, rising ıd guiding her feet, arms, hands, to such an ;peditious laying of cloth, plates, platters, ıives, forks, cold fowl, bread, almond cakes ıd ale and jug of spirits as was never seen be-ıre, seasoning the same with such a running ısillade of hits, twitches, prancings, frowns, ıths, stamps of foot, that my Lady Desirée resently 'twixt tears and laughter was fain lay the serving maid willy-willy to this lord ıd fill his cup and bone his capon. The hiles dancing in her bosom was a fond and vely measure of redress.

All that kept her from a runaway was the Captain's warning that the Duke could only be crossed at peril to herself and him.

So she meekly served his each caprice, sat on the arm of his chair, his arm about her, trembling, terrified and wondering when she would dare flee, and, if she fled, would "Mr. Greville" be awaiting her; would she ever be able to reinstate herself in his graces. And a thousand other most piteous thoughts, such as a poor lady in plight so unexampled might be supposed to be torn by, rent her.

"Drink to me, Sweeting!" says his Grace, a bit raised by this, by his frequent cups; and, while bewildered at his environment, no whit averse to so bewitching a companion.

"Nay," returns she. "No more, prithee."

"Drink, I say! S'blood, girl, is a man to be crossed by his own wife? Her he's vowed to love, and her who's sworn to obey him? Drink! Nay? Well, well, no tears. Laugh, sing! Come, we'll tread a measure together."

"Adorable one!" whispers Dudleigh, as he halts and casts his arms about Desirée, printing upon her lips a kiss of ardor and admiration.

Then breaks she from his grasp nimbly; his Grace essaying to catch her back again, tweaks she the cloth from the table with both hands, tossing it and all its freight up to the ceiling, with her knees upsetting the board, and bringing about such a clatter, smash, splash, crash as calls in every soul in "The Shippe" to question of so surprising a matter.

First headlong enters Boniface, Dame, Jennies, Boots, stable boys, the brace of surgeons, cards in hands; the whole number of the quality, sons, daughters and husbands; Josephine, shivering and telling her beads; Copeland, Lady Sophia, apt for any sort of a hubbub, on his arm; Lady Belinda, trembling,—and anon, like fringe upon this palpitating mass of inquiry, Sir Francis, haggard-eyed, now returned from the cliffs to get one more glimpse in life of her he worships.

Alack! he sees her just in the very act of hurling a trencher at the Duke, who still would claim his right to touch her lips again and again.

"Madam! Madam!" shouts Copeland, loosing his arm of its fair burden. "Remember how unseemly 'tis for any lady to affront, deny and pommel her wedded lord!"

And "Ah-h-h-h!" shrieks Lady Belinda, now catching first time sight of both the Duke and his portrait, and like to fall in a dead faint, but that Dudleigh rushes to her support and Josephine and Lady Sophia, between them, cut her stays.

"My adored Belinda!" says he, quite ready, as ever is his noble sex, "here I have been a-waiting and a-pining for you these hours gone; here have I ridden breakneck speed to meet thee, wed thee; here hath fate tossed me from my steed and left me in your affectionate arms. Dearest creature," added he, as her eyes open to his, "I do swear by George himself! my melancholy distraction hath been such that every lady I beheld did seem to my inflamed fancy to be thee!"

The which, Desirée hearing, did smile warily at and shrank back in the shade of the curtains, whiles Sir Francis, now recovered from his suicidal bent, makes his way to her side triumphantly.

"Oh, Mr. Greville!" says she, turning from him and leaning near Josephine.

"Nay, not 'Mr. Greville,'" says he. "Sweetest of all ladies, I ask not any explanation of

this merry misunderstanding," jerking eyes over shoulders to where Dudleigh and his Belinda are arms in arms, "but merely leave to tell you I am Sir Francis Whiting and your suitor."

"Sir Francis Whiting!" repeats Desirée, amazed, all her red roses blooming in her face and then anon giving place to white ones.

"Then," says she, contrite, yet proud, haughtily withdrawing the hands he's seized, "leave me, sir, for I am the Lady Desirée Beauchamp and merely your kinswoman!"

"Now, by my faith!" interrupts the Captain, loud of lung, and gazing at Sophia.

"Not Mistress Moppettus, of Drury Lane, after all, but my Lady Sophia. Madam, and you'll give me leave I'll seek your father and ask of him the rarest gift he's got to bestow."

"Lud, Captain Copeland," whispers the laughing minx, "an' 'twere easy seen, love making's the most catching malady there is."

Whiles Desirée, very low responds to the ardor of Sir Francis, under safe cover of the rant and chatter of the rest:

"Nay, sir, never could I learn to regard you with other feelings than those of cousinship."

"A fib," says he, impudent, which ladies like, God bless 'em! A-withdrawing of her again behind the arras, and laying upon her ladyship's lips such a kiss of dear love and fealty as must win her to his way of thinking, *sans* too much delay.

Anon there arose once more clatter, stamp, hallo, imprecation, shout. "Hist! Oho! Caught! Bagged!" without in the inn yard.

"My father!" cries Lady Belinda.

"To the ship. Now time and tide are apt," says Copeland, appealing to Sophia.

And, while the irate parent entered by the one door, out slips his child and the Duke of Dudleigh, Copeland and Sophia by t'other. Off and away to France and the first priest to be found, with joy bells a-ringing in their four pairs of ears all night, despite the jocularity of the waves.

The Lady Desirée, coming from behind the curtains, says, waving Sir Francis' arms full-length away: "Oh, sir, you were running away from me into France, fie! and now to plead your passion to one you ne'er set eyes upon until to-day."

"Ah, my lady, you were running away from

me into matrimony with one unseen! any resort so's to be acquit of me! fie! and now to hold me on the brink of paradise and cry me 'off' when I'd die for you!"

Desirée pouted. She beheld the pout most entrancing, in the mirror opposite her. She smiled. She raised her eyes; her hand. She beckoned to him that waited breathless, panting, on her mood.

"Don't die, sir," says she, and presently is smothered in his arms.

The Lone House at Leith

✝

It was Elspeth McRobbie's house; she was born in it and had lived in it all her life; when she was a child playing on the dunes, a girl mending nets in the sunshine on the porch, a young woman betrothed to Donald Frazer, a mourner at the deaths of father and mother, a lonely left-at-home, when the lover shipped on a packet for Queensland.

Once Elspeth was pretty, with yellow smooth hair snooded with a blue ribbon, blue eyes and rosy cheeks and lips. That was many years ago, at the time that Donald sailed away and used to write her the occasional brief, awkward, misspelled letters, which now lay, a thin bundle tied together with a fish-line, under the straw pillow on which she put her head every night. Pretty soon he stopped sending even these meagre tokens of

affection, and for many years Elspeth heard nothing at all from Donald Frazer.

Notwithstanding, she set a candle in the square window that looked toward the sea, every night when she went to bed, as had been agreed upon between them; and for more than twelve years she never missed placing it at nine o'clock, and taking away the empty candlestick at five in the morning, cleaning it and getting it ready for the next night.

One day, Maggie Campbell's brother Tom came back from Queensland and brought news that Donald had shipped on an Atlantic liner, had married a French girl in the States, and had sent a photograph of his wife over to his uncle in Queensland, and that it was very pretty.

After that the candle never burned again in the sea-window. Elspeth gave up going to the kirk of a Sunday, thereby scandalizing both Dominie and congregation; she gave up even the few visits she had ever paid, gave up all intercourse with her kind that was not enforced, and the house seemed lonelier than ever before, which is saying a good deal. For it was built amid a pile of water-tossed gray

rocks, on the edge of the shore, not a stick or a tree near it; with a paling fence, made of drift-wood, squaring off a little yard at the land-side, before the front door, wherein straggled in summer time a very few sad little blades of grass, a dandelion or two, and any number of tall ragged weeds. The shell-path was un-trodden; the door-knob and latch rusty, the side-lights and window-panes covered with cobwebs and dust, the chimney tumbling to pieces, and the ship's figure-head of Nelson, which had once stood proudly over the lintel, had long ago fallen down and now lay igno-miniously half buried in a sand heap, with the heroic nose broken off, and the gaudy paint beaten dull by wind and rain.

The long lane that led down to the house was cobble-stoned from Leith Road to Els-peth's gateless patch, and stubby little tufts of verdure made green traceries between the stones and a lone hawthorn bush that strug-gled for existence at the town end of the stretch.

Nobody ever came down the lane, or ever went up it, not even Elspeth herself; she al-ways struck out from the back door with her

fish creel strapped to her broad back; by the cross path over the dunes to the common, thence to the road that led to Edinburgh, where she walked ever morning, in season, to sell the fish she had caught.

It was June now, and sometimes in Scotland June isn't as humorous a month as it is some other times; this particular day the sky was azure, with only a few billowy white cloud-islands hanging low over the sea-islands, and dipping to the tops of the masts of the smacks that were farthest off. The moss on Elspeth's stone well was emerald green, and the lichens on the roof were the same promising color; the hawthorn had four precious blossoming little branches cuddling to leeward. Some sparrows hopped in the lane and a lizard darted under Nelson's shoulder with a fly in its mouth. To be sure, Elspeth, sitting cross-legged on the bow of her overturned boat, with a tar-pot beside her, and a tar-brush in her strong hand, dully took in that June was June, and that the breath of the sea was sweet and soft, as well as salt.

She let out her bare feet from under her linsey-woolsey skirt to the sunshine, and the

warmth felt good to her, and she pushed back her cap from her faded hair, and looked full up to the sky, and that felt good to her, too.

She thought something, vague enough it is true, about God and his mercies to her, in the line of health, and strength, and eyesight, and food, and shelter, and she even went so far as to be conscious that the old pain and woe in her breast had subsided and settled down into a stolidity that was thankful for physical comfort, and was almost content to let love rest in his bed sleeping, so long as hunger and cold were not guests come in his stead.

She had finished tarring her boat and now sat still, staring at the sea; the jubilant, exulting, free, wild sea; and her pulse beat with it for very joy of life and breath. Then she heard voices in the lane which, although unusual, boded nothing but some fisherman or woman on the lookout for a coming sail, or a smack over-due and watched for; so she sat still and she heard what was said.

Maggie Campbell spoke: "Elspeth's not home yet from Edinboro, that I know well enough. Sit down here with me, Jeannie, till she comes."

"That I will. How long'll it be? because the porridge is on the fire, and nobody there but the wee lassie to mind it," answered the other woman.

"Not long. Now I've promised to break the news to her, I'm afraid to do it!" exclaimed Maggie, with a sigh.

"Hoot! an' what'll you be afraid of?" said Jeannie, stubbing the toe of her clog shoe between the cobbles with a stiff will.

"If Elspeth McRobbie were a bit of a growin'-like lassie, you might be talking, but an old woman like that."

Elspeth, sitting with her feet in the sun, drew them in beneath her petticoats; the heat had turned cold, so cold that it seemed to freeze her and to hold her there listening, when, according to her short code of honor, she ought to get up and go out of ear-shot.

But she didn't; she strained to listen instead and heard all that there was to hear.

"She may be old," replied Maggie, deliberately; "for all that, I'm out of the notion of being the one to tell her Donald Frazer's dead, and his French wife's come here, like to die, too, at any minute, leaving a baby boy with no

relatives in the wide world to look to; and nothing till his future but the almshouse, so I am." And Maggie Campbell's lips shut tight and her eyes snapped, while Jeannie screwed up her fists into a telescope and looked for the time of day in the sun.

And Elspeth McRobbie?

If she were old yesterday, she seemed far older to-day; the lines about her mouth were stencilled in as if with steel, and the vestige of lass-time blue that had shone in her eyes a few minutes ago turned gray as Nelson's sockets, yonder in the sand, and she bit her lips, drawing no blood to redden them, however hard the teeth pressed, and she got up and strode around the corner and nodded to her friends.

"Oh, Elspeth!"

"Oh, Elspeth McRobbie! we thought ye were not back yet!" they both began.

"And we're come," Maggie stopped, confused by the steady, uncompromising stare of Elspeth's gaze.

"I was yon!" she remarked, jerking her thumb around toward the beached boat. "I heard all that ye said about Donald Frazer's

wife and bairn. They're no concern of mine that I know of."

Elspeth took up her shoes and stockings from the side windowsill, and sat down on the ground and began to put them on. Maggie and Jeannie exchanged bewildered looks over the bent head of the woman tugging at her brogans.

"We thought," returned Maggie, refugeeing in the plural pronoun, from the asperity of Elspeth, "that ye ought to know it."

Jeannie nodded her head in confirmation. Then Elspeth asked bluntly:

"Why?" And having conquered the wet boots, she got up with the ado necessary to four-and-forty and twelve stone.

"Weel," answered Jeannie, rushing somewhat sheepishly to Maggie's rescue and twisting her head almost out of her cap with the effort.

Elspeth stood still, inquiry in her every line, and polite assistance far from her aspect.

"Weel," echoed Maggie, looking at Jeannie in surprised terror, and then seemingly gathering courage from internal conviction, which friendship refused to bestow, she added, in a

high, determined key: "I'll just make a clean breast of it, Elspeth McRobbie, so I will! The Dominie counselled ye should be told, and he prayed the Lord of Hosts ye're hard heart, that's kept ye from the kirk these many years, might be broke, and that the news of Donald's death might be the eenstrument of bringing ye're soul to the saving. There!" And bursting into tears, Maggie Campbell turned and fled, with Jeannie in her wake, also in tears.

Elspeth stood still for at least three minutes, which is a good while for any woman to stand still in a crisis of this nature, and then she stumbled into her home and drew cowering to the cracked hearth where the faggots smouldered, and the pot hung cold. And she shivered and her teeth chattered, as she repeated the Dominie's words at third-hand. "Ye're hard heart that's kept ye from the kirk these many years might be broke;" and she said the word "broke" over several times while she spread her big hands before the faggots, and it was really something above a half hour before she recognized that the fire had gone out; that the cloud-islands that hung over the sea-

islands had crept up the coast, and were spilling themselves in the most jubilant manner on her roof and trickling down over her through the loosened bricks of the chimney.

Then she arose from her knees in the lonely kitchen and, although she set supper for the cat, she ate none herself; nor did she go to bed.

But she went in, it is true, to her bedroom, and drew the slender packet of Donald's letters from under the pillow, and with them unopened in her hand, sat down in her armchair and spent the whole night in silence and wakefulness.

When the morning came, she went about her work as usual, took her creel of fish up to the town, and came back with some shillings in her pocket. Flour and tea were needed, so instead of turning down her lane, she kept on the Leith Road, to the city and went into her accustomed shop to buy. While she was waiting for the lad to do up her parcels, she heard the women talking the news, and before she left she knew that Donald Frazer's wife was dead, and that the bairn was like to go on the town, especially as there was nowhere else for

Then Elspeth went back to her home and went about her business as usual, until Thursday, when, as she was mending nets outside the back door, she heard wheels out on the Leith Road, way at the other end of her lane, and she looked up.

A hearse passed along quickly, as hearses do sometimes, causing live people to have idle fancies that the dead they contain are not sore missed. A wagon, drawn by a shaggy trotting pony, followed the hearse. A man sat on the seat; he was the overseer of the poor; he drove the pony. The Dominie sat beside him; on the back seat there was a woman; Elspeth did not recognize her, but she surmised her the overseer's wife, or, more likely, one of the almshouse women taken out for an agreeable airing to the potter's field. Between this woman's arms was a child, a boy.

Elspeth sprang to her feet, her eyes hand-shaded. She watched fiercely until the hearse and the wagon, the woman and the child were out of sight. The half-mended nets lay on the sands; the house door stood open; the pot boiled over; and the delighted cat lapped the cream-pan clean, while Elspeth walked quickly

up into Leith town and straight to the undertaker's.

She asked her questions and received her answers in about five minutes from the young man who presided over the establishment in the absence of his principal, and whose demeanor revealed all the commendable blending of melancholy satisfaction and cheerful alacrity usual to those of us who superintend the last rites of the others of us.

Elspeth learned that the child was to be taken to Maggie Campbell's to-night, and that to-morrow afternoon the friends and acquaintances of the husband—of the departed "Meester Frazer"—were to meet at Maggie Campbell's and there determine whether any one of them would consent to take the bairn, or if it should go to the almshouse to be educated in the excellent methods of that admirable institution.

When Elspeth McRobbie got out of the undertaker's, and away from the sleek, deprecatory smile of the young man, she paused in the street, and glanced over to the kirk which she had not entered for so many years. Its doors yawned open, and the beadle was carry-

ing the trestles back to the undertaker's. Elspeth had to move to let him pass.

She stepped along quickly and went into a shop and bought some blue yarn and a shilling's worth of buns and lollypops and taffy, and then she walked home, and beat the cat with the broom-handle and built up a fresh fire, and filled the pot, and got out her needles and set up a tiny stocking with her new yarn, and knitted away until gloaming, when she struck the little foot on top of a fishing-pole in the corner, and opened the middle door and went around into the front part of her house, a place she had not set foot in since her mother died.

She opened the windows cautiously and pushed back the shutters with the air of one not wishing to be seen; yet she need not have had any fears of that kind, for her nearest neighbor was a full mile away, and he a blind hermit at that. Passers on Leith Road could not see the lone house, and stragglers were never known, so Elspeth had the situation to herself, and employed it in swishing down cobwebs fourteen years of age, scrubbing floors, polishing window-panes, forcing open the nailed-up door, and sweeping off the granite

step; rearing up Nelson on his boots once more, plucking up the healthy young weeds by the roots, and finally standing in the gate-opening, and taking breath while ten o'clock rang out of the fog up to her from the clock in the tower of the kirk.

Then Elspeth went to bed and to sleep, rising refreshed for the customary duties of her day.

These were accomplished by noon, although the unmended net still swung between the posts on the porch. She paid no heed to it, but with eyes every other five minutes raised to the clock on the chimney-piece, Elspeth laid her cloth for two for supper, and took out the white loaf in its napkin from the cupboard, and placed a bowl with her one silver spoon in it; she piled the second chair high with her Bible, tied a pink ribbon around the neck of the reluctant and thievish cat, scrubbed her creel with soap and sand, brushed her cloak, put the lollypops and taffy in her pocket; and lastly gathered the sparse little hawthorn flowers and set them in a shell full of water in the middle of the table.

Then Elspeth sat down with her cap and

cloak on, and looked at the clock from four until six, when she got up, strapped the clean creel on her back and walked into town to Maggie Campbell's house, which stood in Grayham's Close, and had a marble step at the door.

As she neared, a babel of voices struck her ears, for the windows, as well as the door, were wide open. Elspeth paused at the sweet shop, because she saw the Dominie crossing High Street into the Close, and making for Maggie's. He went in and silence ensued, while Elspeth drew a bit nearer, till she reached the marble step; she lifted her creel from her back, and sat down, with her face half turned toward the room where were assembled the friends of the departed's husband.

No one paid heed to her, or even knew she was there; they were all too much occupied with the Dominie, and each other, and the luckless, pretty little child, who was pityingly passed from one to another, as people might inspect and pass along some undesirable, if undeniably handsome insect.

Then the Dominie's voice was uplifted and he said:

"That it behove someone among this company of Christian people to feel it incumbent upon himself or herself to take to his heart, and to bring up in the fear of the Lord, the helpless orphan whom Providence had seen fit to bereave, at so tender an age, of every earthly solace and protector."

And thereupon the Dominie proceeded with a marked and eloquent discourse, setting forth the privilege which lay at their gates to avail themselves of, the solemn duty of it, the beauty, the advantage, the moral gain, the holiness, the spirituality, and the special blessing of this opportunity to exercise Christian love and charity.

To all of which his audience lent a couple of dozen or so of very attentive ears, and then broke into the excuses of the patriarchs of old —nothing more novel having hitherto been discovered—and the upshot of the meeting was, that Donald Frazer's bairn would have to go to the poorhouse, and a crying shame and disgrace it was, as the Dominie averred, which he would have overcome by taking the child himself, barring the hard fact of having fifteen of his own to support on a salary of forty pounds per annum.

Elspeth now arose from the step, and walked into their midst, and stood stock still, being greeted much as a vision might have been, solely by the open mouths and eyes of her acquaintances, and a few low, amazed murmurs.

The child alone moved; sliding from a thin woman's lap to the floor, and flinging his well-sucked orange across the room on the Dominie's nicely brushed boots.

"I bided," Elspeth McRobbie said, "until you all had your chances to speak for the bairn. I cannot give him the home, or the rearing, or the breeding, or the learning, some of you could, and I would na have dared to pit my offer against that of any one of you, but since none better's for him, I'll take him, and it ain't always the most siller as makes the most happiness."

At this point Elspeth's voice almost broke, and reddening for shame at such display of the borderland of emotion in the presence of her fellow-beings, she darted over, stooped, picked up the child and, without waiting for either praise or blame from Dominie or flock, she landed the boy in the creel, passed the leather

straps over her broad shoulders and strode away up the Close to the High Street, out to Leith Road, to her lane, down to her house, and into the kitchen with her burden.

She put the boy, not a whimper from his red young mouth, on top of the Bible, and handed him the cat and the buns, and white bread, and taffy, while he laughed with delight and pulled the cat's tail until it shrieked.

Meantime Elspeth shut the door close and barred it; dropped her oil-cloth curtains, set a candle in the sea-window, and took off her cap.

Then she stood and surveyed the child, and she laughed, too, for joy—joy so holy and sweet, and pure, and triumphant as, I suppose, only unmarried women can know, who, one day, by the intervention of Providence, find themselves in possession of that for which their hearts have always hungered—a little child to lead in the way it should go.

Elspeth, responding to the boy's amazement at her laughter, caught him in her arms, and with a furtive look about, lest prying eyes might in some way penetrate her paradise, she pressed him to her heart, and covered his little face with tenderest kisses.

The next Sabbath, Elspeth McRobbie walked into the kirk in Leith, holding Donald Frazer's bairn by the hand.

The Brothers

PÈRE LA TULIPPE walked through the forest and Pamphile Jolicœur trudged along beside him; the path was a very rugged one, full of ruts and holes made by the hoofs of horses and the wheels of carts, which infrequently went this way with loads of firewood. Above their heads the branches of trees met tip to tip, so that squirrels leaped back and forth; beneath their feet lay the brown of last year's leaves, and as they trod upon them it was like treading the wine-vats, for sweet and pungent came up to them the aromatic breath of autumn, the wild fragrance of the fallen foliage.

Presently the road narrowed to a footpath—a desolate little crooked streak threading its way through that saddest of all places, a great forest scathed and scarred by fire, where the long battalions stand, robbed of all their armor

of green, brother leaning against blackened brother ere he falls. The larches, with all their feathery gladness gone; the spire-like cedars pointing ever upward, though they totter; the strong pines, shorn of every tassel; and all about, the flaunting fire-weed—ghost of the ruddier flame that has so lately crawled up these gray disfigured boles. Wild asters nodding on their slender stalks, and thistles, all their down wind-blown toward the west. The *siffleur*, his white throat shining in a laggard sunbeam, whistles his evensong from the top of a birch.

Presently, by a sharp turn in the path, Père la Tulippe and Pamphile come face to face with Lac Eternité. It is a dull, broad sheet of brown water, with a few rude log-rafts sidling at their moorings. Yonder by the south lies the village—a very small hamlet hugging the lakeside, close sheltered at the back by a hill on which they have built the Church of St. Alphonse, staring and white, with its gilded cross lying against the sky. Just now the first and herald star of the night is shining between its arms. To the west the hills hang over Lac Eternité, seemingly brooding, half the time, in

a melancholy way upon their own shadows, reflected in the still waters that gently lap their base in summer, and that chain them with icy grip through the long and wearisome winter of Canada.

The hills hang low—a long stretch of purple undulations, with little linking slopes of green, a sheep-pen thatched with straw nestling in this hollow, a clump of maples full of sweetness, all their sun-dyed scarlet shivering in the fresh breeze of early twilight, in that cleft. It is as yet only September, but autumn speeds with quick, bright feet up here, painting all the leaves she kisses a ruddier red than buds of May; flecking each round berry crimson, powdering all the brush with gold, chasing all the song-birds southward, frosting hard the soft brown mould.

"It will be good weather to-morrow," Pamphile says, shading his eyes with his long and bony hand, as he looks toward the sunset, standing on a fallen log the better to take his survey; for Pamphile was incredibly small, a man in years, a child in stature, with that terrible blighting hump forever on his tired back. He had sharp eyes, a large and tender mouth;

he had been the favorite pupil of the good priest, Père la Tulippe, and acted as server at the Mass every Sunday and saints' day at the Church of St. Alphonse at Lac Eternité.

"Yes," Père la Tulippe assents.

"My brother will be doubtless at the farm before me this night." Pamphile jumps from his perch with agility. "And, *mon perè*, you will eat supper with us; is it not so?" The hunchback hesitates slightly as they now reach the margin of the lake, and the path, less wide, diverges right and left.

"No, my son; this evening I go home. I thank you that you have been so good as to carry the chickens for me." The good priest takes a brace of plump fowls from Pamphile's shoulder. "To-morrow, if you like, I have visits, too, to make, and the good people yonder in the valley will be as glad to see you as me, if you will come along also, with your violin."

Pamphile laughs merrily as he takes the violin from the priest. "Ah, *mon perè*, the violin! it is my child, my wife, my father, my mother! Oh, well, you know!" The hunchback presses his passionate lips to the tense

strings, and they seem to whisper back a response.

"And your brother—eh, Pamphile?" the good priest asks, with sly laughter in his eyes.

"Ah, no, no; my brother, he is the first; the violin, he is the second. Bah! you know!"

Père la Tulippe laughs with fat shaking shoulders, as he turns off to the right toward the hill and the parsonage. He knows! Well enough, indeed, as does every soul in Lac Eternité, that in the sight of Pamphile Jolicœur, his brother Hyppolyte is the most perfect and wonderful of beings.

Pamphile is twenty years of age, with perhaps the longings and intuitions of human nature as potent within him as if he were not the bruised and misshapen creature that he is. Hyppolyte is twenty-four years old, straight and supple as a young birch, round-cheeked and large-eyed, with white teeth and a soft smile; but Pamphile never knew a jealous thought in connection with his brother, never asked better employment than to wait upon him, to serve him, to admire and uphold him.

Hyppolyte was his idol, and the violin which Père la Tulippe had brought him from Quebec

years ago, and had taught him to play upon, was the one chaste mistress whom his young heart owned.

As Pamphile struck into the bush again to the left, meaning thereby to reach the farm more quickly than if he kept to the open, the sun's last curving rim of molten ruby shone above the black crest of Mont Ste. Marie; it bathed every roof in the little village in vapory flame; it fired the gilded cross on the spire of St. Alphonse with a halo of splendid rose; it touched the evening star into a crimson jewel; it flooded the dull bosom of Lac Eternité itself with a glory of great color; it lighted up the long northering chain of hills with beacons of answering glow; it shone over in the far-off placid valleys of La Chaudière, and then, softly as the last call of dearest death to a weary heart, it died out for Lac Eternité and dawned for the other side of the world. A loon laughed shrilly from the alder bushes. A crow, flying late from the cornfields across the lake, dropped a black wing-feather on the water; it whirled with the breeze, rode on the ripples, and rocked away until it was washed up on the narrow strip of sandy shore at the northeast.

The Brothers

The twilight was very short; already the sky was mantled with the silvery gray of night; there were mists rising dimly in the hill clefts, the candles glimmered in the village, but you could not have found the crow's feather had you even stooped to look for it. The stars were pale; cold nights rob them of the splendor and warmth of their July shimmer; the moon, young and slim as a sickle blade, gave little light.

Hyppolyte Jolicœur thought of all this as he stamped though the bush, beating aside the branches from his face as he went, and listening to the laughter of the loons, and wondering, too, if Pamphile would have a good hot supper smoking on the table by the time he reached the farm.

Hyppolyte had his gun over his shoulder, but he had shot nothing that afternoon; he had met a friend from Chaudière, and instead of looking after game the two had sat on a stump and chatted for four hours. About what? The bears and the caribou, and a little of the crops, and the dance to be at Henedin Blouin's the next night, and the trout; how Hyppolyte's luck had been poor a long while back with his

fishing, and how fat the rabbits were this year, and how true it was that Aspasie Baldette had been cured of her lameness at the shrine of La Bonne Ste. Anne! All this and more of as much importance; and now he hurried through the gathering darkness of the woods the shortest way to the farm.

Hark! Hyppolyte, with the true instinct of one brought up in the woods, stoops low with his ear to the ground. He hears a soft, slow, even tread, the footfalls, he knows, of some animal; and presently, from the weight, he is sure that a bear is not ten yards from him. He rustles the dry branches over his head, he stamps on the dry leaves and crackling undergrowth; he has no mind to shoot at a mark he cannot see, and by this time it is so dark that Hyppolyte, young-eyed as he is, can distinguish nothing a yard from him.

He lies down upon the earth and listens; the tread has ceased; now it begins again, quickened and going away from him. He rises, and for a moment leans against the trunk of the nearest tree, his hands around the muzzle of his gun.

"Bear!" Hyppolyte exclaims. "Bear?"

he repeats in an incredulous tone. "Not two acres from Lac Eternité. Well, that is a strange thing in September. Plenty to eat in the bush—so—so—something—someone has frightened him. Where from? No bear is more near than ten acres away deep in the bush—*Tiens!* Yes, where I set my traps last year in the hollow near the cascade, above the trout-pool. *Tiens!* the trout-pool?" Hyppolyte repeats musingly. "Someone is there, then. What does he do? I go. I see. Yes!"

He starts off, feeling his way easily, for he knows every rod of the land as a boy who has grown a man lingering along its length and breadth. He startles a squirrel from its nest as he stumbles against a fallen tree, peering into the gloom, and so, on and on, with the dewy branches smiting his warm cheeks, Hyppolyte, handling his gun carefully, makes good way.

"Well," he says to himself, standing still and drawing his sleeve across his damp forehead as he shakes the twigs out of his cap, "this is seven acres I come—now we see." He leans his gun against a tree, and then lightly, his cap between his teeth, he swings himself up

another and climbs, limb after limb, as high as he dares. He feels the last bough sway and bend with his weight, and between the cedar tops he peers out and over.

He sees a light, dim and flickering, moving, wandering, but still a light, up yonder in the bush at his trout-pool! He laughs gently, and sliding down the tree as fast as a snake would glide, picks up his gun and puts on his cap.

"Well. I catch him. I catch him," murmurs he joyously, as he makes straight for the light.

Stealthily the young *habitan* creeps on, lightly he treads as he nears the point he seeks. He cautiously makes a detour, going off a little north, so as to be able to take his observation from the rocks over which the cascade tumbles foaming, making farther down the trout-pool, which, as well as the rest of this piece of the bush, he and Pamphile own.

As he draws nearer to the bit of open, he again beholds that faint and feeble glimmer—no longer moving, it is at last stationary. Hyppolyte crawls through the narrow cleft between the rocks; the jagged side cuts his round unbearded cheek, but still he chuckles fiercely. He cannot help thinking of one who has been

his enemy always from childhood up—of one who hates and envies him—and whom he despises. He has reached the other side of the fissure; he climbs, clinging to the spray-wet boulders, from height to height; he slips, he catches at the low sweeping branch of a larch and, at last, he crouches on top of the pile.

He raises his head slowly and carefully, and then, laughing, he dips down and slakes his thirst in the water.

Hyppolyte sees a strange sight. Down yonder, at the mouth of the pool where it narrows to a stream once more, there are two stakes stuck in the crevices between the stones, one on either bank; between them hangs a meal sack, its mouth held open by a stout, short twig. Farther on, in the middle of the brook, stands a man, up to his bare knees in water, beating the stream with a cedar branch right and left, kicking over the stones with his strong feet, driving the fish in shoals up into the sack. Then jumping quickly with the long jump of an Indian, he seizes the sack, empties it in a basket, and replaces it again between the stakes, taking care always to have a stone in it for weight.

Hyppolyte sees all this by the light of the small lantern which has been placed on a rock on the shore in such a position that its rays shall fall directly on the improvised net, thus luring the already frightened fish still more surely to their capture. Hyppolyte slides down on the other side of the boulders; he lies prone and drags himself cautiously along toward the light, breathing heavily now, his gun under his arm.

The fisherman beats the waters, he springs to catch up his sack full of the shiny trout, he stoops to empty the treasure—

Hyppolyte stretches out his hand and snatching the little lantern, turns its bright beam full upon the face of the sportsman.

"*Mère de Dieu!*" The bag of fish falls back into the brook from a nerveless grasp.

Hyppolyte springs to his feet, lantern in hand; he bounds to the side of the other, and holds up the light under his eyes.

"Ah-h, you—you!" He pants, choking with rage.

The fisherman makes the stealthy movement of one who would escape. Hyppolyte

grasps him with his teeth by the arm and shakes him, dropping the lantern roughly.

"So you it is, eh, rob my trout-pool, eh; you dog of half-breed!"

The other lifts his arm to strike.

Hyppolyte covers him with his rifle.

"I hate you, moon-face, red-cheek, girl-boy!" screams the half-breed. "Fishes is mine like as they are yours. Land yours, water yours; fishes mine if I get first—"

"Thief," cries Hyppolyte. "Son of squaw! You rob me, eh? will you? Not once again—oh, no—I kill you like moose—so!"—and he pulls his trigger with a jerk.

The half-breed fell with a thud, half in the stream, half out of it, and Hyppolyte Jolicœur kicked over the lantern and fled like a hunted animal—whither? Blindly, blindly, but full of instinct straight for his home.

Pamphile sat by the open door; he had waited until he was weary, then he had eaten his supper, setting aside some for Hyppolyte in the oven; then he had played softly on his violin. Not fearing any harm to his brother, he still drew his bow as Hyppolyte ran into

the yard, and came panting, breathless, dashing into the farmhouse.

It was only when he beheld Pamphile that he remembered; he shrank away back into the darkness out of doors, but Pamphile pulled him in.

"What is it?" cried the hunchback, smoothing Hyppolyte's hand. It was moist, so was his sleeve.

Pamphile glanced down; there was red blood on his own fingers.

"You are hurted, eh, Hyppolyte—you meet a bear, eh?"

"I—bah—no—yes—I did meet a bear; that is so!"

"Well?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Where you hurt?"

"Nowhere."

"Blood"—Pamphile says conclusively, as he examines his brother, limb by limb.

"Bah, no; I don't hurt."

"You kill him, eh?"

"Yes—yes—I kill him," and Hyppolyte Jolicœur sinks down by the supper-table and utters a terrible sob.

"Who?" the hunchback whispers hoarsely.

"Audile Cacouette"—

"Tell me" . . .

The thin high-cheeked face of the littlehunchback assumes an expression of tense and horrible agony as he listens; his large head rolls from side to side, his bright eyes open and shut quickly, while Hyppolyte brokenly tells his story.

Pamphile stoops to his brother's ear when all is told.

"Wash him off," he whispers, touching the dried blood on Hyppolyte's sleeve; "put him off, go to bed—get up in morning just as today; work in the garden; go to the dance at Blouin's"—Hyppolyte shudders—"Yes,—yes, well, good-bye—Hyppolyte, swear me you don't tell—even Père la Tulippe?"

"Yes—where you go?"

"In the bush."

Before Hyppolyte can utter another word the hunchback is out in the darkness of the night, fleeing like a wild creature through the woods he knows as well as his brother. He is fleet of foot, and sure of hand, and in a short time he has made the ten or eleven acres between the farm and the trout-pool.

It is dark—the shadowy, chill dark that deepens just before the dawn. Pamphile crawls down the rocks; there is no lantern to guide his footsteps as his long bony hands seek what they ache to find.

He steps into the stream; something makes him stumble; not a stone or a log—no!—he stoops, he feels, it is a human body—the *métis*, Audile Cacouette.

He drags it ashore, he tears off the skin jacket and shirt, he strips his own warm body and lies down upon the shot man; he breathes into his mouth, he chafes his arms, his chest, he enfolds the chilled body with his long, lean arms; he calls him "Audile, Audile"—all in the dark.

Presently, with a shudder, Pamphile starts up, and now he flees away faster than the hunted hare. Toward Lac Eternité he runs. The day is beginning to be born; the crest of Mt. Ste. Marie is tinged with the silvery gleam of another new morning; the cross on St. Alphonse catches a white pale streak from the east, and the stars grow faint and fainter, as awakening birds twitter on the boughs, as dewdrops glitter, as rosily laughs the orient greeting her lord and lover—the rising sun. Pam-



phile skirts the lake, and runs through the village; he climbs the hill. Jingling in his pocket is the key of the church—he hears it, and pulls it out as he nears St. Alphonse. He pauses in the churchyard, and, shuddering, the hunchback makes the sign of the cross, and then jumps up the wooden steps, two at a time. Giving a keen backward glance over the sleeping village, he unlocks the church door, with trembling fingers. He goes in, closing the door carefully behind him; he runs to the altar and falls for an instant on his knees—then, white as the altar cloth, darts to the little cupboard at the right where the sacramental wine is kept, and takes it out; he thrusts the flask into his pocket; he turns, he runs, he locks the door, and holding the key between his numbed fingers, he soon plunges into the bush, just as the first sunbeam of this Thursday looks over Mt. Ste. Marie into Lac Eternité.

Soon smoke is rising from all the chimneys of the village; the fowls are fed, and the cows milked; the mists fold over and curl up from the hollows, eaten by the warmth of the sun—once again the little hamlet is full of its lazy every-day motion.

The Brothers

A group of men sit smoking pipes on the rude and dirty steps of the one "store" the settlement of Lac Eternité can boast.

"Well, I tell you, I hear it—by St. Joseph himself, I hear it!" exclaimed one of the group, knocking the ash vigorously from his bowl against the toe of his untanned moosehide shoe.

"What you hear, eh? Jean Baptiste, what you hear?" queried a new-comer, sauntering up with his fat hands thrust into his short pockets.

"I tell you, Henedin Blouin, I hear quarrel in the bush last night when I come home late from—well—from—"

At this auspicious point, Baptiste looks down sheepishly, laughing, the which mirth is joined in by the entire group.

"Yes, yes, from, we know, eh! from St. Francis, where there lives a good girl named Ursule!" More laughter greets this sally, and Jean Baptiste takes off his fur cap and scratches his head and looks around at his friends with simple pleasure written on his broad countenance.

"Well!" he resumes, "I hear quarrel; that is true."

"Two loons laughing at each other in the light of the new moon," suggests Henedin Blouin, contemptuously.

"Two *habitans* screaming at each other by Hyppolyte Jolicœur's trout-pool," retorts Jean Baptiste with warmth. "That is true, good Maître Henedin, and I hear gun go off, eh? Loons carry wings, not guns, eh?"

Blouin turns sharply toward Jean Baptiste.

"Whose voices you hear scream? You know them?"

"Yes, I know them well enough; you know them, too."

"Some one of Lac Eternité?"

"Well—yes."

"Who?"

"Who do you think, eh?"

"You tell." Henedin Blouin speaks with a measure of authority; he is game-warden of the township and acting general constable as well.

"You tell, Jean Baptiste, you hear? Tell, right away, now."

"Hyppolyte and the *métis*," the young man says half sullenly.

"Always quarrel there," murmurs one of the group.

"Yes, yes, always; what about? Well, in the blood; about nothing," responds another, moving his seat so as to get the sun out of his eyes.

It floods the little vale with yellow splendor warming the beauty of the maples into even a redder flush; turning the brown of the velvety sumachs into scarlet; drawing the scents from the shrubs, and shining into the eyes of the birds and making them sing for joy that it is a good pleasant morning.

"And you—what you do, when you hear?" asks Henedin Blouin slowly.

"I listen one minute, then I run."

"Where you run—to them?"

"No. I run away, I tell you, fast home, into bed quick."

"Who see them this morning? You? You?" Blouin nods to one and another of the men.

"No, no," they answer.

"Well, I see Hyppolyte this morning," Jean Baptiste says thoughtfully.

"Oh, you do. Well?"

"I cross two acres to bring home my cows from the little vale; I skip through the *petit brûlure* back of Hyppolyte's house, and I see him at the well."

"What he do?"

"Wash."

"What?"

"Jacket."

"What he say?"

"Good morning."

"When you come back? what then?"

"Same thing."

Blouin whistles softly to himself, and the other men look half stupidly in silence at each other.

"You see Cacouette to-day yet?" he asks, turning on his heel and facing them all, shrugging his shoulders to the heat of the sun as he speaks.

"No—no," three or four reply, shaking their heads.

"You see him, Jean Baptiste?" Henedin emphasizes his question by rapping the young man on the leg with the handle of his spade; for Jean Baptiste is looking discreetly at the ground.

"No, not I. I tell you I go to his house just now, and I knock and scream out, 'Audile, Audile, lend me your axe. I break mine, and I want some split-wood for the fire.' No Audile!"

"Who then?"

"The mother and the father, talk, talk, talk."

"What they say?"

"Well, old Cacouette, he say, 'My son is sick in his bed;' and the Indian she say, while her tears fall down in the dough she mix, 'Now go away, go away; I tell you my son is dead man. The fire will not burn, the bread will not rise, the well run dry—oh, yes, my son is dead man—go away.'"

"Oh—h!" Henedin Blouin whistles again softly to himself.

The men are all looking down, when Henedin sees thrown on the porch before him the shadow of some one coming near.

He turns; it is Hyppolyte, sauntering up the path through the long grass.

"Good morning!" they all say, glancing over at the hill-tops, vacantly.

"A nice weather," Hyppolyte answers.

"Yes, a nice weather," Blouin echoes. "We talk about Audile Cacouette just now. You see him this morning, eh, Hyppolyte?"

"No, not I." The young *habitan* turns a ghastly white as he stoops to tie the loosened thong of his shoe.

"Well, why?" adds he, straightening himself and leaning with folded arms against one of the roof-posts. "Why?" repeated Hyppolyte, as no answer is vouchsafed him.

"Oh, I don't know." Blouin is loath to hint even at the disclosures of Jean Baptiste, as yet. Hyppolyte is a favorite, and justly; for until this day no breath of evil or dishonor or discredit has ever tarnished the purity of his good name.

"Oh, I say," cries he warmly. "What about Audile? What is it, eh? Come! You know—I will know also."

"Well"—Blouin moves off a few paces, dragging his spade after him noisily—"well, the squaw say he is dead!"

Hyppolyte leans more heavily against the roof-post.

"Oh," murmurs he, "that is a bad thing." He takes off his cap and draws his arm across his brow.

"Oh, say you, don't cry!" laughs Jean Baptiste, rising and following Henedin Blouin. "You never too good friends—you and the *métis!*"

"I don't cry," Hyppolyte answers. "I am

warm—dry, too." He rubs the back of his hand across his mouth, as if striving to compose his young and trembling lips.

"When they bury him?" he finally asks, with a jerk, driving his heel into the soft soil of the path.

"When they find him," answers one of the men. "Bah! Hyppolyte, the *métis* stay off all night; the squaw cry out he is dead; and Jean Baptiste there, he say last night in the bushes hear a shot. That is it; that is all."

"Oh!" Hyppolyte drives his heel still deeper into the earth. "Well," he adds, after a pause, "I tell you I am dry. It is a warm day. I have my beets to get in. Yes. Good day."

Blouin and Jean Baptiste are leaning, talking, by the fence as Hyppolyte goes by.

"You be at Henedin's to-night for the dance, eh, Hyppolyte?" says Jean Baptiste.

"I don't know," he answers.

"Oh, yes, boy, you come. Why, yes, not much dance without you and Pamphile and his fiddle!" calls out Henedin Blouin warmly.

"Well," Hyppolyte's voice is reluctant as he stalks down the road.



"Where is Pamphile to-day?"

"What you say, Jean Baptiste?"

"Where is Pamphile to-day?" screams the young man lustily.

"Well," Hyppolyte turns squarely and faces the two men, "I don't know."

All day long he works in the garden, harder and more rapidly than he ever worked before in his life, stopping now and then to slake his thirst at the well. He hardly thinks. Nothing occurs to him as possible to do but to obey his brother's instructions literally.

Meantime the bit of morning gossip has flown around the little settlement, gaining detail and strength from each fresh pair of lips that rehearse it. Old Cacouette has been searching the bush half the day, but even a trace of his son he cannot find; the squaw sits by the open oven-door wailing like a lost spirit; Henedin Blouin has had a long conference with Père la Tulippe; little groups meet in the roads, lean over the gates, whisper, nod and shake their heads mournfully and wisely. Still Hyppolyte Jolicœur works on among his vegetables until sundown.

He goes then into the farmhouse and lights a



candle, stumbling over Pamphile's violin in the twilight. It falls from the shelf to the hearth, and every string vibrates as if in pain with a low and strangely moving sound. Hyppolyte picks it up, enfolds it with his arms, and rushes up and down the kitchen, hugging it to his heart, and sobbing tearlessly as men sob sometimes when they are all alone with their past, not uttering any word, but choking with that unsyllabled language that frames often enough the purest prayers of repentant souls.

At last Hyppolyte went into the other room and laid the violin on the feather bed, the big one with dusty, dark curtains, whereon both his father and mother had died some years ago; then he came back in the kitchen and set two plates and bowls on the table mechanically, and some milk and cold meat, and bread and lettuce. Afterward he sat down and waited, just as Pamphile had waited last night for him. But then he came home; now Pamphile did not. The candle was burned down to the socket, and the wick had fallen over in the grease, when Hyppolyte suddenly looked up, out the window, and saw the lights shining from every room of Henedin Blouin's house.



He remembered the dance, and, rising with slow steps, he jerked up his trousers, washed his hands, pushed back his dark hair, put on his cap, blew out the last spark of the candle, and setting open the farmhouse door, walked out and over to Henedin Blouin's.

When he got there, his appearance seemed to be a surprise to all. A peculiar hush, for a moment, fell upon every one as Hyppolyte entered the large, well-filled kitchen, a hush broken only by the shrill piping of Jacques Baldette's flute.

Blouin was the first to recover himself, the guests nodding, one by one, after his example, as Hyppolyte stood, cap in hand, in the doorway.

"Well, well, now, and where is our good Pamphile?" and "How can one dance without his music?" and "When will Pamphile be here?" and "Why are you thus late?" came thick and fast on every side, questioning Hyppolyte. To all which he said stupidly:

"Well, I tell you, I don't know."

There was a shadow over every one, every thing; and no amount of piping from the flute of Jacques Baldette could overcome the

strange melancholy that presently had rendered the dance much more like a funeral than a festival.

There was a little laughter from a gay young girl as she took a few coquettish steps before the fireplace, but it sounded forlornly, so positive had the gloom now become.

Hyppolyte still stood by the door, his hands thrust into his pockets, when it was suddenly burst open with a violence that almost threw him down. Old Cacouette, trembling and disheveled from his day's searching in the bush, strode in.

"Where my son?" he cried, peering around anxiously and angrily into every face, even behind the door, where Hyppolyte Jolicœur still stood.

"Where my son? I tell you, I want to know; some one know. I hunt all day, all evening in the bush, around the lake, up the stream, the pool—everywhere—not find. Now I am old, but I know I have ears. I feel some one know. I hear it go around and around the settlement. Jeanne, my wife, she hear it all day go around and around. Some one knew something of my son. What is it?"



cries the old man, tottering to the middle of the floor and looking desperately about him.

Henedin Blouin steps up to him and lays his hand on his shoulder.

"Well," he says, "Joseph Cacouette, you are right; yes, it is true, someone do know something; some one think he have hear the voice of Audile last night late in the bush—" Henedin stops short in a puzzled way, and glances first at Hyppolyte, then at Jean Baptiste. The old man's eyes follow his.

"What, eh? Jean Baptiste, you hear voice of my son—? What say? What say? Come, speak!"

"I don't know," Jean Baptiste answers, slinking back toward the fireplace.

"Don't know? don't know!" cries the excited Joseph Cacouette, making one stride across to Jean Baptiste and giving him a tremendous shake.

"What else, eh? What else you hear? Come!"

"Hyppolyte's voice and gun shot," screamed the terrified Jean Baptiste, squirming himself free from the old *habitan's* grip.

Cacouette makes another bound to Hyppo-

lyte, his wrinkled thin face livid with rage; the girls and women scream a little; the men shuffle about uneasily; Blouin rushes between the two, easily restraining Joseph Cacouette with his powerful arms, while Hyppolyte Jolicœur stands pallid, motionless, silent.

"Where my son? Give my son," mumbles Cacouette, as the farmhouse door swings open.

Pamphile comes in, half leading, half dragging, the wan and haggard *métis* behind him.

"Pamphile!" Hyppolyte utters his brother's name, as he might have breathed in awe that of some vision-seen saint.

"Well, what is't! Well, what the matter?" The little hunchback looks from one to the other of the speechless group, whilst the half-breed skulks languidly up to his father.

Blouin recovers his senses first.

"Well, Pamphile, see Jean Baptiste here; he think to hear Hyppolyte and Audile quarrel in the bush last night. He say he know Hyppolyte's voice."

"Oh, oh," laughs the hunchback, closing his thin fingers tightly around his brother's arms. "That is a good one. Jean Baptiste



has a good ear to make mistake my voice for the voice of Hyppolyte!" He shrugs his shoulders in disdain of such unworthy comparison.

"It was you, then?" Henedin asks.

"I say yes, I."

"You shoot!"

"I shoot—yes, I. We quarrel; we scream; I shoot; I leave Audile like dead, half in water, half out. I run afraid, home—then—" the, hunchback pauses tremulously a moment. "I —run back. I warm him with my body, I pull him out, I fix him with herbs, and in the shot—not so bad—I give him—wine."

"Eh? well, what! Where you get wine, Pamphile? You?" Henedin Blouin interrupts suspiciously—for the moment his legal function rising even above his curiosity.

Pamphile Jolicœur flushes and pales.

"Well," he replies slowly, as he involuntarily makes the sign of the cross, "I—I tell to Père la Tulippe all that, to-morrow." He shakes his head as he raises it once more and goes on with his narrative. "I drag him to the choppers' hut in the bush, deep, far-off, you know—I watch all day. Well, I bring

him back now. Well, what you say, Audile; come, what you say?" Pamphile runs across the kitchen and pulls the *métis* by the sleeve that hangs loose from his wounded arm.

Audile does not turn his head, but he speaks in a sullen, dogged way: "I say so—like you, Pamphile—that's all." And presently he and his old father walk out of the farmhouse quickly home to the lad's mother.

Blouin shook hands warmly with Pamphile and Hyppolyte; so did all the other men, Jean Baptiste nervously, but with a hearty touch.

Then the two brothers left the house of Henedin Blouin, just as the dawn slipped pallidly over the crown of Mt. Ste. Marie to marry with the ebbing night.

"Hyppolyte, come—" Pamphile says to the half-dazed man beside him.

"Pamphile! oh, God!" cries he, catching the hunchback up in his strong, young arms, and never laying his loved burden down until they reached the open door of their own home.

The Lady of the Sonnets

✝

"But he that writes of you, if he can tell
That you are you, so dignifies his story."

"Make but my name thy love and love that still,
And then thou lov'st me, for my name is Will."

PARTLY for rest—partly for pleasure—I had loitered and sauntered about Warwickshire for days and days, spending long, sweet hours full of sunshine and unheeded rainfall in Stratford, Warwick, Thelsford, Hampton-Lucy, Leamington, Shottery, when finally one April night I found myself at the door of a quaint little inn, whose swinging sign was a golden swan, and whose plump, good-humored hostess presently guided me to the best chamber her domicile afforded.

"It be'nt much, sir, in the way of grandeur

and the like, but it's comfortable and clean," she remarked as she bustled about settling towels and carafes.

"It is charming," I answer, with a glance of satisfaction at the low-gabled ceiling, the dormer windows with their broad seats, the piled high feather beds, the tall chest of drawers and the taller clock that stood mutely in one corner.

"There's some as finds it pleasant, and some as doesn't," murmurs the worthy woman as she watches me unstrap my satchel and take therefrom a Bible and a Shakespeare and deposit them on the stand.

"Aha!" continues she, with a respectful curtsy. "I 'ad it in my mind, sir, as you was one to appreciate, and now I knows it."

"How so?" I question, not in the least averse to a bit of gossip with my buxom entertainer.

"By that same," returns she, laying a fat forefinger on the Bard's book, and following my inquiring eye with her own shrewd one.

"A gentleman as travels with 'im in 'is portmanteau is sure to be one as would find the

best chamber of the Golden Swan to 'is mind, sir."

"Yes?" I say, interrogatively.

"'E 'ave slept in this chamber," she says with the air of a high priestess delivering the edict of an oracle.

"Who?"

"Shakespeare, sir."

"What!"

"Aye, sir, such 'as been 'anded down in my family from father to son this more than three hundred year; and we 'ave records, old books of reckonings as will prove the same; to-morrow, sir, when you have rested a bit after your journey, I shall be proud, sir, to have my daughter h'Em'ly show the same to you, sir."

I incline my head in acknowledgment.

"In this very room, you say?" I ask.

"Aye, and the bed must 'ave stood in the very same spot, for as good a reason as can be given, and full of proof—there is no other place in the room where a bed could stand!"

"That is quite true," I assent, as I take in the proportions of the tiny apartment.

"I 'ope, sir, as you'll be suited in h'all ways as long as you see fit to honor the Golden Swan

with your company. Shall I fetch the candles, sir?"

"If you will be so good."

As she bows herself out of the narrow doorway I heave a deep sigh of utter content, for all these days and weeks Will Shakespeare and I have wandered up and down in Warwickshire, boon companions, close bosom friends, aye, marry, had I not carried him in my bosom the while I left my luggage to be fetched by the carrier? had I not supped with him, read, chatted, dreamed, dined, sighed, sung with him—and now, here, this night, I should sleep in the room where he had slept before me, and perchance, who can tell, lying yonder, deep in the down of the dame's best feathers, I should, in visions born of Time alone knows what strange perpetuities, see his face—hear his voice.

In the gathering twilight I stood leaning against the slope of the roof near the window. I heard a bird twitter softly to its nesting mate beneath the eaves; I turned to look out and watch it. The air that greeted me was soft, full of April scents, new drawn from the breast of the maiden earth of springtide; a single star

shone down betwixt the tiny panes of the casement; I heard the ripple of the running river as it ran down the dame's garden way, pushing aside her posies in its play, and I saw the bird float upward from his mate and speed on silent wing yonder, there, westward, a speck of life against the dying warmth of the sunset sky.

I followed his flight till I lost the lap of his wing in a thicket; then glancing aside and up to the heavens I beheld, lying outlined against the fading crimson, a magnificent castle.

I had thought I knew my county well, but I could not name this stronghold. It seemed in a state of most perfect preservation, too, and so far as my ken went, there was not such a pile in the length and breadth of England.

"Shall I light three, or four, sir, asking your pardon?"

The dame had come back and stood, candles in hand and match to sandpaper, as she spoke.

"One moment," I exclaimed, making place for her at the window. "Will you kindly tell me what castle that is?"

"I don't see any, sir," she responds, staring out in the direction I have indicated.

"You don't see any!" I cry. "There, yonder, see, where that bird comes from the thicket and toward us, see! his flight crosses the turret as he goes."

"I see the bird, sir, plain enough."

"Then you must see the castle," I return, with slight and pardonable vexation.

"But I don't, sir," she says in a curious, awe-struck voice. "No two ever sees it together at once."

I look at her: she is apparently a sane, well-favored, sturdy, steady, worthy woman, upward of fifty years of age.

"You don't know, sir?" she continues in a lower voice, as she gazes at my disturbed countenance.

"Know what?" I inquire rather testily.

"The phantom 'ouse, sir!"

"No, I do not know." I turn back again to see its towers, turrets, parapets and gables limned clear and sharp against the yellowing horizon.

"Asking your pardon, sir," the hostess says, watching me with profound curiosity, "do you see h'it still?"

"Plainly, perfectly; and do you mean to tell me that you do not?" I cry excitedly.



"Aye, sir, that I do not; but I've seen it in my time. We all of us has. My 'usband, good man, as is dead and gone these five year now; h'Em'ly, my daughter; Davy and Jim, the 'ostlers, and, Lor', sir, asking your pardon, as many more as ever set foot in this best chamber and looked out of this casement; but no two ever sees it together at once," she repeats pertinaciously.

"And has it never been seen from any other room or any other window anywhere else?"

"Never," she answers with pride and firmness; "but it 'ave been seen from this room and this window off and on, by gentle and simple, for three hundred year back, and never anywhere else, never."

"Has no one ever gone yonder and tried to find it?"

"Many a one, sir; gettin' his trouble for his pains, climbing and traveling in and out, hither and thither, only to learn that there was nothing to it but h'empty h'air!"

"It looks," I hazard, still staring at the magnificent pile as it grows grayer, but not less defined, against the gathering gloom, "it looks



most intensely real; which way does it lie—by Kenilworth, does it not?"

"Yes, sir, it always shows nigh there. Books, I hear, has been written on Cumnor Hall—but none never about our phantom 'ouse—beg pardon, sir, will you 'ave the candles lighted now, sir, three or four?"

"Not any," I replied absently.

"And will you be pleased, sir, to 'ave your supper served to you in the coffee room? the ordinary do be full of farmers this time of night—or 'ere in your own room?"

"I supped at Stratford before I came," I answered, still half in my dreams, and then I hear the latch click in the door and the loose boards creak in the narrow staircase, and I know that the dame has left me to my own devices, for this night at least.

There is no moon as yet. Indeed, were there, this long, sweet English twilight would change her beauty into pallor. I turn back again to the window; I lean my elbows on the broad ledge and my chin in my palms. The 'Bard's' book, my familiar, is beside me; the bird, weary of a fruitless search for flies, hies him home again, and so still am I that I feel the whirr of



his wings as he passes me by to seek his mate's nest under the thatched eave over my head.

I look up.

There it stands, clear, distinct, most mortal monument of stone and cement.

Either I am mad or the woman is.

I rush to the stand and dash great handfuls of cold water on my face and eyes. I look at myself in the cracked old mirror—this is surely I, and yet—what! who is this that, like a phantasm, airy, still, but potent, seems to look over my shoulder—to look into my reflected eyes with such benign intensity as mingles glance with glance and makes of him and me but one?

Just Heaven! what has come to me!

I pick up the book in feverish haste to see if I can still read and understand, and as I turn the worn leaves over, what hand is this that guides my trembling fingers and makes them pause and halt at this:

"But he that writes of you, if he can tell
That you are you."

The volume falls from my grasp, and with a fierce, struggling, protesting, derisive laugh at myself I return to the casement.

It stands there still.

I turn away, I pace up and down the room, I close the sash with an ugly snap—but what avail? The castle rises as real a thing before me through the leaded panes—and stay! there looks at me also through its diamonds and its dimity a face, the Bard's, gentle, winning, tender, persuasive, regretful, as the large eyes turn from me to gaze at the phantom house.

Well-a-day, I am not a fool or a craven, or —thank my God!—a lunatic, or weak of will, or infirm of purpose, or aught that a man should not be. But that night in Warwickshire I was "possessed." I did not possess myself, but a "spirit of the wise," not "sitting in the clouds and mocking me," but full of alluring autocracy, came earthward for a little.

I simply did that which I could not have helped doing had the brown earth yawned before me in a bottomless pit, or had my wife sought to restrain me with the softness of her lips and arms.

I put on my hat and, looking over my shoulder to the last to assure myself that it was not fading, or perchance gone altogether, opened my door, sped stealthily down the staircase,

heard the teamsters in the ordinary laughing over their beer, smelled the smoke of their pipes, and with a tumultuous rush got myself out of the inn unobserved, and turned my eyes toward it.

It still was there.

Between it and me, what lay of land might be I could not tell; I did not care; I counted no cost; I simply set forth.

The road was plain enough and straight enough for a mile or more; lonely, too, with only a cricket a-chirping at some cotter's hearth as I swiftly glided past, or the lap and laze of the river as I crossed it on some little bridge. But here, where two roads met—and neither bade me fair toward my goal—I was fain to take to the fields and the sheep-tracks, and to waken the young lambs as I went with my footfalls on the dewy turf.

And then came hedges through which to break an opening, and babbling brooks to ford, and shepherds' dogs to elude, and thickets to thread, and long, windy commons to cross, and at last a forest barred from my anxious, questioning gaze the sight of it en-



I plunged in—deep into the gloom and sweet, woody scent of the place—my sight striving to pierce the darkness, striving to find a loophole through the branches wherein to seek and see the object of my toil.

But none was afforded me. Dashing onward blindly, I presently stumbled, nearly fell, and, recovering myself, paused to laugh aloud at my folly.

My own mirth rang back at me out of the stillness with a sorrowful and sinister sound — as if another had caught up my laughter and sent its echo back to me with tears.

I called myself a fool, and turned my face backward to the inn. I felt my way for a few paces, but soon an impenetrable barrier seemed to arise and bar my return.

"So be it," I cried aloud, and set my face again for it.

And as I went, gliding between the close-standing tree-boles, I heard footsteps following mine, pace for pace, and halt for halt, and turn for turn, and double for double, until my brain was fire within my head and my blood ran ice through all my veins, and the great sweat dropped from my brow upon my clinched hands.



And yet I feared not; it was daring, not fearing, that so tortured and accompanied me.

At last I heard the whisper of the river—the Avon—that I had lost on entering the forest, and presently, with the brush of the silvery willow boughs against my cheek, I emerged from the gloom into the lightness.

Oh, fate! Would it be there?

I raised my madly eager eyes. It stood there still, and so near to me as seemed a space I could bridge with twenty paces.

To cross a field, jump a stile, follow a little upland track marked out by shepherds' feet and herds' hoofs betwixt the green, to crawl through a thicket, to climb a knoll, to run down the declivity and reach the moat, to gain the drawbridge, to find myself upon it; what was all this but the labor of a few moments, for had I not company? Aye, verily. One who sped beyond my speed, and whose desiring feet outran my pace.

I crossed the bridge. I stood within the castle yard. I rushed around the green semicircle of the inner court. I panted. I paused. Then I stood to look at it.



As fair a house of stone and cement as ever mortal hands had made.

I walked slowly, now, up to it. I touched the rough wall with my hands. I touched the mortar with my lips. I felt hot tears scald my eyes. I leaned against it. I lay down exhausted, and rested my head on its hewn and shadowy side. I drew my breath in great gasps and sighs and sobs, and then, as the footsteps which had been my followers died away from my hearing, something else came to me in their stead.

The sound of human voices. One deep, tender, rich and full; the other, the sweet, soft treble of a gentle girl.

I started up, and groping by the walls of the castle—for I could not endure the idea of losing hold of the phantasm within my grasp—made my way in the direction whence the sounds appeared to come. I had not far to go, when a light shone clear across the green from a window. I drew nearer, and nearer; the casement was open, a hanging of arras fluttered a little in the breeze.

I heard his voice, indistinguishable as to words at first; then hers, with youth's ready



laughter threading through all its happy language.

I held my breath, and my heart stood still, as I came closer yet, for in good sooth nearer I was compelled to come. It seemed to be not I so much as this other, who, so possessing me, did urge me on, and on until, if I were he, or he were I, I could not tell, save that with these two eyes of mine I did behold him "in his habit as he lived," as I had sat but this very day just dead, and gazed at this presentment in the choir of Stratford church—the broad, fair, high brow, the deep, soft-lidded eyes full of love, the mouth so strong and sweet, and the overshadowing beard, with its point upon his chin—and the firm hands, whither went they? and what clasped they to-night? Hers!

Her little white hands, as he knelt beside her where she sat, attired in a cymar of yellow silk lined with white, and quite uncoifed her dainty hair, falling scented to her small unstockinged feet.

"And how fares it with thee to-night, covet-my-heart?" quoth he, pausing in his long glances into her face's blushing mystery.



"Aye, marry, well, sir—since you are with me."

"And time has been a laggard without me?" whispers he.

"Thou knowest," she answers.

"And Janet?" anxiously.

"Well bestowed in her bed, sir."

"God be thanked! She likes me not."

"Nay, not so; she fears thee."

"And wherefore? What would I to harm her starling? What would I to smirch her dove? Is't not mine own, too, and dearer to me than my life, and dear as honor?"

"Aye, dear, my love, but my good nurse speaks ofttimes and every hour of the day upon thy wife."

"Tush!" He springs to his feet and begins hastily to pace the length of the room, even afar into the gloom out of the rushlights' flare and so that I cannot see him.

"And Nurse Janet cries, 'Alack the day when lovers come with mystery!' and 'Woe is me the day they come with their names all given and gone to others,' and all this and that."

"Tush, child!" cries he, coming down to her



out of the shadows and taking her fair face betwixt his palms.

"Harm thee? Death! I would sooner die —but forego the sweet history of thy love once in a while—forbear the touch of thy hand on mine, the friction of thy red lips' flesh upon mine own—I cannot—nor I will not." He takes her in his arms.

"Nor shalt thou—there," she cooes, stroking his beard with the tip of a tiny finger. "Sit thee down, my laureate, and rehearse to me how fares our Juliet; and, hast put in her place, in thy wonderful tragedy, Nurse Janet?"

"Aye, marry, sweetlips, and that have I, with a will—thou Juliet of my soul!"

"And shall I call thee Romeo?" she inquires, with pretty arch of merry brows.

"An' thou wilt, my chuck. I am the Romeo of thy Juliet; the Orlando of thy Rosalind, as thou well know'st. Of a surety, thou hast not forgot the day I saw thee first, tripping through Arden woods, thy cloak about thee, but not so closely that I did not discern the fawn-girth of thy girdle, or the roundness of thy bosom; thy coif and veil upon thy head, but not so well bound and tied withal as to hide from

love's fond, prying eyes the silkiness of thy tresses or the peril of thine eyes; and Nurse Janet in the rear, too near, too near by far—thou mind'st?"

"Aye, marry, well," she laughs, plucking at his sleeve, and then grows sudden sober.

"Wherefore, mistress?" touching her mouth lightly. "Thy smiles play hide and I would seek them out. Show me thy pearls, sweet-lips, wilt thou not?"

"Aye, sir, if thou wilt." She smiles again and daintily, with a half heart in it, only for him.

"What is't?"

"I bethought me of my father." She sighs deeply, and her lids droop as she absently plays with the silken cords of her garment.

"And of him what?"

"The day I saw thee first; 'twas the last sight I have had of my sire."

"Amy, sweeting, cannot I teach thee to forget one who has almost forgotten thee?" He speaks with gentleness.

"Ah, thou dost indeed almost persuade me, sir; but sire is sire and child is child—blood is blood, and that must tell!"



The Lady of the Sonnets

"Thou'rt right—thou'rt always so; then confess to me, thou yearn'st for courts and pageants, young souls to 'company thee, and music, feasts and youth. 'Tis so? Nay, do not fear to tell me, sweet?"

"'Tis not so, sir—credit me—'tis but this: I would my father, the Right Noble Robert Dudleigh, Earl of Leicester, should do my dead mother the poor justice of proclaiming my birth and existence, the rather than keep me houseled here at Kenilworth like the veriest prisoner in a cage."

"A cage!" He glances about at the rich and splendid furnishings of the apartment in which they are seated.

"Alack! and yes; and is a cage without bars because the gilder hath been there at work with the ironfounder?"

"Thy father is immersed in court intrigues, great projects, high in the Queen's favor, and—"

"Aye, aye! the Queen!" The young girl rises with a gesture of impetuous scorn and grace.

"The Queen, sir, for whose fond sake, Nurse Janet hath told me oft and over, my

mother was murdered in so dastardly a fashion as makes me hate my father and curse him in my nightly prayers."

"Amy!" He follows her and puts his arms about her, she yielding to his touch as melts the wax upon the altar as the flame doth curlingly caress its fairness.

"What wilt thou?"

"I'll not say thou hast not reason—I'll not deny thee that all thou say'st is not God's truth—but list! There, as thou liest so against my heart, hear'st thou not its beatings?"

"Aye, that I do," she murmurs faintly.

"Thou dost? List, sweetlips, my lady, list. As surely as thou dost hear the pulse of the heart, whose sole mistress thou art, so surely shalt thou go down to far posterity until the round world doth end, bearing a title nobler, sweeter, greater, more wondrous in the minds and mouths of men than any that thy right noble and honorable father, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, can ever confer upon thee."

"Thou mean'st?" she exclaims, raising her wondering eyes to her lover's face.

"I mean, sweet mistress, thou honey god-



dess of my heart's idolatry, that in the verse of thy Will thine ambition shall have its way."

"Oh, sir!" cries she, hiding her soft face in the folds of his cape.

"Nay, sweeting, 'sir' me not. 'Tis thy Will that speaks thee fair, and that will hand thee down in nobler line than hadst thou half a hundred kings to thine inheritance."

"And if I shall not 'sir' thee, sir, what wilt thou, prithee tell me?"

"Thou coy, sly provoker of more love in him that holds the most that man to woman e'er did bear. Say 'Will' but once, and I'll reward thee twice—and thrice—aye, till thou cry'st me, 'Hold, enough!'"

"Say—Will," murmurs she, between two little, low, sweet sighs, quickly followed by his kisses.

"Thou pearl!" cries he, holding her still in his arms' fold as he paces up and down the room, now in the shadow, with kisses—now in the rushlight, with kisses—kisses for her lips, and forehead, and cheeks, and hair, and throat, and hands, and some, to the full as tender and reverential, for the two little feet he has prisoned in his one broad hand.



"And what shall they call me?" she questions at last.

"What will time and the world call thee, thou little one?"

"Aye, for since none hath ever spoke the truth of my name outright, save thee and Janet, nor ever will, belike, what shall thy baptism name me?"

"A sweeter title I do give to thee than ever maid or wife or widow yet did own."

"And shall none never know or read it, save but only thee?"

"Nay, thou ease-of-heart and rest of an o'erwearied life." He sighs the deep, swift, smothering sigh of a man as he lays his fair burden down upon the broad, skin-covered seat and wraps her fallen partlet about her throat, pushing to the casement, lest the chilling wind shall visit her face too roughly.

"The round world, with all its unborn and uncounted and unshriven millions, shall call thee back through all its lost, past centuries; shall speed thee on through all its decades yet to come as Shakespeare's 'Lady of the Sonnets.'"

"'Tis a sweet and noble christening." She



gazes up into his face with a look of indescribable rapture and admiration.

"It fails not to content thee?"

"Nor could it; for what am I that I should live forever in the mouths of men the lady of thy love?"

"Thou'rt she, and, so sufficing me, I'll make a world full of all lovers, maids, and men acknowledge to thy fair supremacy. Wist not, dear love, there is one potency that's born of pain, and that is power; and there is a potency that's kin to tears, and that is silence; and there is a greater potency than e'en these two, withal, and it is mystery. Trust me thou'lt live a life in sweetest service of the lip and pen when queens are dead as doornails and empresses blown to dust."

"An' I will trust thee, thou master of my duty and my heart. Nay, look not out into the night," cries she, restraining him with the timid touch of ten small fingers on his arms. "What would'st thou ask of it that with thine eyes thou dost so importune the dark?"

"Sweet chuck, the hours do hie them on apace and—"

"What hast thou to do with hours that dost

sit so oft in the clouds and make great men thy puppets with thy quill? Nay, turn thy face to me. Will—"

"Will I not, and that too willingly."

"Speak on, for I could listen to the music of thy tongue until yon slender sickle of a baby moon had grown as round and full as she who died a week ago."

"Thou soft bewitchment — an' could'st thou?"

"Aye. An' could I not! I'll show thee how I'd keep thee chained here, mayhap against thy will." She laughs a low and tender laugh as she utters the last word.

"Nay, never—that could never be, for, sweetlips, thou dost know right well my will is ever thine."

"Stay, then, I'll show thee—thus—" and with a grace as full of coyness as of sweet idolatry, she laid her two arms about his throat and locked together the fingers of her slender hands.

"How fares it with thee in thy prison, sir? How now! You cry not 'Grace,' or 'Pardon,' or 'Set me free,' or 'I prithee, lady, of thy mercy, to unlock these doors and let thy ser-



vant forth unfettered!' How is't? How fares my lord?"

"As fared no man ever before anywhere," cries he, straining her to his heart.

"An' looks not liberty a desirable thing to thee, seen through these two white bars of softest flesh?"

"So would I live and die, a captive in thine arms—oh, Amy, thou enchantress; thou who to-day art wanton, sportive in thy lovesomeness as could but be a child—who yesterday didst paragon a priestess in the wisdom of thy speech, and whose to-morrow's custom can contain no cloy nor yet satiety, but only that unmatched variety that doth bid me swear I'd sooner die thus with my aspect anchored on thy fair, dark face than live my fourscore years and ten the master of another."

"'Tis true thou lov'st me," murmurs she, withdrawing a little from his embrace.

And only his eyes make answer to her assertion.

"Thou saw'st my mother when thou wert a child?" she questions at last, after a pause.

"Aye."

"Am I like my mother?"

"Aye; and yet, no. Thou'rt fairer—ten times, twenty times more fair."

"'Tis in thine eye. Nurse Janet says there never lived a fairer lady than Sir Hugh Robsart's daughter, Amy."

"Save one—Sir Hugh Robsart's granddaughter, Amy."

"Ah, thou magic twister of all words and moods to thine advantage and best satisfaction."

"And to thine."

"And I am fair?" she says, musingly, laying her hand upon the arm that still encircles her, and looking with the eyes that crave even the more after the most of a loving and beloved woman, albeit in years she was as yet but little else than a child.

"Aye, fairer, to my mind, for all thy swarth of skin, and for the two sloes of thine eyes, and for the stolen blackbirds of thine hair; fairer than that perfect-fabled one who rose full-fashioned from the bosom of the boundless deep, and now sits high i' the top of heaven's own court—a shining star, to light young lovers on their hasting way."

"So fair as this, my Will?"



"And fairer; mistress, listen, for, Amy, thou hast that in thy beauty that rouses all the man in man, but so informed with thy pure soul's mild virginity as rouses all man's godship, too, and makes him kneel here to worship thee."

And then I know not what befell me, for leaning there against the corner of the castle's jutting stones, I felt them totter, tremble, crack and, crumbling, give way with the burden of my weight.

My eyes, being fixed with a very fascination of intensity on the two people to whose talk I had been listening, seemed for the moment to close against my will, and presently, when with a violent effort I contrived to raise my lids, the long, bright dawn of English spring-time smote full upon my sight. I was sitting on one of the lower steps of the westerly staircase in Mervyn's tower at Kenilworth. My cheek leaned against the rough stone of the wall, and my two hands grasped with nervous tenacity the jagged edge of a mass of fallen masonry; my forehead was damp with the dews of the spent night, and my garments torn and muddy. I had walked over hill and dale, through brier and bush, forest and common,

some eleven or twelve miles—the distance from Shottery to Kenilworth Castle. As I pursued my way back again in the early freshness and beauty of the day, I suddenly bethought me of the month—it was April, and of the date—it chanced to be the 23d. Having gained the Avon on my road, as I crossed the stream on the little wooden bridge I stopped for a moment to look over the rail at its rippling surface. Yonder, below the clump of hawthorn bushes, whose blush was sweet as love, a single swan floated majestically on and on, and, still in sight, sailing with the majesty of loveliness there upon the bosom of the Avon, it sank beneath the winsome waters, leaving no single ripple even to sound its requiem.

NEW YORK.

A RARELY BEAUTIFUL and ARTISTIC EDITION of

Three Masques

By BEN JONSON

With introduction by William Cushing Bamburgh and a Houbraken Photogravure Portrait of Jonson

Published by ROBERT GRIER COOKE
307 Fifth Avenue, New York City

Boston Evening Transcript *says:*

Quite in the old-time style of book-making and illumination is the beautiful edition of "Three Masques." It appears in small quarto form, printed from new type on Provence hand made paper, 126 numbered copies being issued in Japan vellum boards, and twenty-six copies being bound in full vellum with silk tie clasps and containing six illuminated initial letters painted by William Cushing Bamburgh. It is to these last mentioned copies that we would especially call our readers' attention, for they represent modern imitation of antique book-making at its very best. Mr. Bamburgh's decorative style is fine, unrestrained and imaginative; he combines the best of the old with the best of the new, the result being that his title page and his illuminated initial letters are beautiful alike in design and coloring. They show, moreover, a sure artistic sense as well as a thorough knowledge of the antique art they reproduce so well. In the dress given them by Mr. Cooke and Mr. Bamburgh they are made doubly attractive to this bustling and unimaginative age. He who assists in the making of a beautiful book should be a man of high esteem in the community and it is this esteem that is certain to be the reward of the publisher and designer of these "Three Masques" by Ben Jonson.

New York Evening Post *says:*

A handsome quarto reprint. . . . Taste and care have presided over this pretty edition of the Masques. It should not be confused with the many routine imitations of Kelmscott printing. . . . Mr. Bamburgh's practice of this art (of illumination) is intelligent. His letters suit the page, and are of workmanlike execution.

New York Times Saturday Review *says:*

An excellent example of the bookmaker's art is presented this season by Mr. Cooke. The book is a replica of one issued by Mr. Cooke last year, and what we then wrote of its illuminated letters may justly be repeated. "There is a charming variety to Mr. Bamburgh's designs, which, while often signifying in the old artists an innate lack of accuracy, with him means simply a well schooled artistic temperament."

This edition, printed in Lucca Della Robbia type, consists of 126 copies, bound in Japan vellum, having six rubricated initials. A special edition of 26 copies, bound in full vellum with silk tie clasps, has in each copy six large hand-painted initials in gold and colors, by William Cushing Bamburgh, and a duplicate copy of the frontispiece portrait. The introductory prices are $4.50 and $16.50 respectively, but the publisher reserves the right to increase the price at any time. Further information furnished upon application.



Two Desirable Books for any Library

Remembrances of Emerson

By JOHN ALBEE

With Frontispiece Portrait. 12mo. Cloth, paper labels. Revised Edition, $1.50 Net.

"One of the best of the works that have been published about my father." — *Dr. Edward W. Emerson.*

"Full of freshness and charm." — *Literary World, London, England.*

"Very attractive book, beautifully printed . . . excellently written, and of great interest." — *Evening Express, Portland, Me.*

"All Mr. Albee's essays are well worth reading, and even the profound student of Emerson is sure to find something, a mere truth it may be, which is entirely refreshing and hitherto unrecorded." — *N. Y. Times Saturday Review.*

Tales in Metre and Other Poems

By FREDERIC CROWNINSHIELD

8vo. Cloth. $1.25 Net

"These poems are the work of one who is before all else an artist."
— *Boston Evening Transcript.*

"Mr. Crowninshield's poetry grows more interesting as his style becomes more individual and he improves in ease and confidence. His taste is naturally so refined that it is a pleasure to see him beginning to forget the asperities of Browning, and cultivating, in addition to the careful versification for which he has always been remarkable, a purity and simplicity of language which are as charming as they are really characteristic."
— *Public Library Monthly.*

ROBERT GRIER COOKE, *Publisher*







